Three Little COUSINS

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from
Grandmother Reynolds

THREE LITTLE COUSINS

BY

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CHAPTER I

Molly and Polly

It had stopped raining; Molly made quite sure of it by looking into the little puddles upon the walk. At first she thought there were drops still falling upon them, but it was only the wind which ruffled the surface. The green grass was misty with rain and upon the bushes the shining drops hung from every twig. Presently a sudden burst of sunshine broke through the clouds and changed the drops to sparkles of light. "There!" exclaimed Molly, "I see a piece of blue sky. Now I may go, mayn't I, mother? It is clearing off."

Mrs. Shelton came to the window and Molly with serious face watched her scan the sky. "It really is brighter," Mrs. Shelton decided. "Yes, I see a piece of blue big enough for a Dutchman's breeches so I think the rain is over, but you'd better put on your rubbers, Molly."

Molly scarcely waited to hear but danced out of the room and down the steps. "Don't forget

your rubbers!" her mother called after her, and Molly scurried to the closet under the stairs, grabbed the rubbers, snatched up her hat and was out of the door in a twinkling. Steadying herself on one foot, she drew on the overshoes, for there was no time to sit down; she could hear the whistle of the cars in the distance and knew there was barely time to reach the station before the train would stop.

It was an important occasion, for would not the express bring Molly's Cousin Polly whom she had always longed to meet? And not only Polly was coming but their Uncle Dick who was bring ing Polly all the way from Colorado to the east. Uncle Dick was not so much of a novelty as Polly, but he was quite as ardently expected, for he was the jolliest fellow in the world, Molly thought, and, though he teased her unmercifully, he was full of jokes and funny quips and amusing anecdotes, besides being generous in the extreme and always ready to put himself out to do a kind turn. As for Polly, Molly had many conjectures concerning her. What sort of girl would she be who had always lived on a ranch far away from the rest of the world; a girl who

had never been to school and only a few times to church, who had never seen a big city, nor an automobile, nor even a trolley car? Would she be very wild indeed, whooping like a savage Indian and eating with her knife like an untutored woodsman? Would Molly be ashamed to have her friends meet her? These questions, to which the answer was so near, Molly asked herself for the hundredth time as she walked toward the station.

Already the train was slowing up and in a few moments Molly was standing tiptoe, looking eagerly along the line of cars. Then she watched each person who descended the steps till at last she was rewarded by the sight of a tall young man who lifted down a little girl about Molly's age, a fair-haired, rosy-cheeked little girl, prettily dressed, and in no way suggesting a wild Indian. The instant Molly saw her, she was seized with a fit of shyness and could not follow her first impulse to rush forward. Instead she waited where she was till the two came up.

"Hello!" cried Uncle Dick. "I expected you would come at least to the next station to meet us, and here you are backing away instead."

Feeling that Polly might think that she really did not show the eagerness to see her that she ought to expect, Molly put out her hand but was presently seized in Polly's fervent hug. "Oh, but I am glad to see you," she said. "I could scarcely wait to get here, could I, Uncle Dick? It's such a long way and to-day was the longest one of all."

"I've been just crazy to see you, too," returned Molly. "I was so afraid it would rain hard and mother would not let me come to meet you. Where's Uncle Dick going? Oh, I see; he is looking after your baggage. Don't you hate sleeping-cars, and didn't it seem funny to have no one but Uncle Dick all these days?"

"No one but Uncle Dick; I like that," said that gentleman rejoining them. "Are you going to have me called a nobody at the very outset, Polly?"

"Oh, I didn't mean ——" began Molly covered with confusion.

"Oh, yes you did; you said it when you thought my back was turned," interrupted her uncle.

Polly began to pound him with her fist. "Quit

your nonsense, you great big, long-legged, old tease," she said. "You know that wasn't what Molly meant. You aren't a bit nice to her; you began to tease her the very minute you set eyes on her. You'd better be pretty good to her or I won't let you take me home again; so there, sir."

Uncle Dick gave her a playful shake. "You'll be homesick enough in a week from now to go home by yourself," he warned her.

"She'll do no such thing," cried Molly, gathering courage from Polly's example. "She'll just love it here, I know. Come along, Polly; we'll get home first."

But, in spite of their trying to run ahead, Uncle Dick's long legs overtook them, and with a hand, which they could not shake off, on the shoulder of each, he rushed them along so fast that they were breathless when they reached the front gate. Molly's mother was at the door to greet them. She gathered travel-stained little Polly in her arms. "Dear Polly, I am so glad we are to have you with us at last," she said. "Are you very tired, dearie? Was it a tiresome journey?"

"It was rather tiresome at the last," Polly ac-

knowledged, "though at first I liked it for there were some very kind ladies who came as far as St. Louis, but the rest of the way I did get tired of sitting still all day. I am dreadfully cindery and black, Aunt Betty, so I am afraid you can't see at all what I look like. I did try to get off some of the worst about an hour ago, but I suppose I am still very black, as black as Manuel."

"Who is Manuel?" asked Molly.

"He's the blackest one of the Mexicans who work for father," Polly replied.

"Take your cousin up-stairs and see to making her comfortable," Mrs. Shelton told Molly. "Well, Dick, I believe you are actually taller than when I last saw you. When are you going to stop growing?" she said to her brother.

"When I come east to live," he returned. "Everything is big out our way, you know. Everything, including our hearts."

"That's true enough in your case," responded his sister. "Your old room is ready for you. Run right up; I must speak to the maids."

By this time, the two little girls were in the room they were to share together, and in a few minutes Polly had made herself more presentable

by the use of soap and water, and with Molly's help in changing her dress. Then the cousins faced each other and examined one another critically, and presently both burst out laughing. "You don't look a bit as I thought you did," said Molly.

"Neither do you," returned Polly. "I thought you would be fair, like a doll I have named Molly."

"And I thought you would be like a picture I have of Minnehaha," returned Molly. Then they laughed again. "Isn't it funny that we are both named for our grandmother," continued Molly. "Suppose you had been called Molly instead of Polly, wouldn't we get mixed up?"

"Yes, almost as much as if we were both called Polly," said Polly, laughing again.

"Are you very, very fond of Uncle Dick?" asked Molly.

"Oh, dear, yes; I adore him. We are just the best sort of friends. He is the greatest tease, but I know ways to tease him, too."

"Oh, do tell me," Molly begged, "for he teases me nearly to death, though I think he is perfectly splendid."

"Wait till he is in a teasing mood, and you'll see," Polly answered. "Oh, Molly, I am perfectly wild to think I am to see the ocean. I have lived among the mountains all my life, and I am wild to get to the sea."

"You will love it," Molly assured her. "Won't we have a fine time all summer together?" She looked admiringly at Polly's curling locks, her dimples, and her pretty fresh white frock. Here was a cousin of whom she need not be ashamed. Why had Uncle Dick called her as wild as a March hare? Why had he given Molly the impression that an Indian was a tame creature beside Polly Perrine?

Polly was thinking much the same thing. Why had Uncle Dick given her the idea that she would find her cousin a fair, doll-like creature? To be sure she had seen a photograph of Molly, but she had worn a hat and coat when it was taken and one could easily get a wrong impression from it.

"Let's go down," proposed Molly; "I have lots of things to show you; besides I want to see Uncle Dick." She felt a little jealous of her cousin's claim to their uncle, and she felt sure her father would appropriate him if he happened

to come in before she reached the porch where her mother was sitting with her brother.

Her father had not arrived, having gone to some business meeting which was sure to keep him late. Uncle Dick was lolling back in a porch chair. "Hello, youngsters," he cried as he caught sight of his nieces. "How are you getting along? What do you think of each other?"

Polly ran to him, and perching herself upon the arm of the chair, turned up his nose with an impertinent finger. "Badness," she said, "why did you tell me that Molly looked like a wax doll?"

"Did I tell you that? Well, if I were a maker of wax dolls, I could make one just like her, I think, if I had some of old Doc's tail for hair and two pieces of coal for eyes."

"Her eyes aren't black; they're like two pieces of brown velvet," objected Polly, "and her hair isn't a bit like Doc's tail; it is as soft as silk. Your nose must go up higher for that, sir." She gave his nose an extra tilt while he squirmed under the process.

"There, there, Polly, that is high enough!" he exclaimed; "it will never come down again if you turn it up too high."

"I hope it will not," said Polly; "I hope it will stay turned up like Dicky-pig's."

"Who is Dicky pig?" asked Molly.

"Oh, he is a little pig I named after my beautiful uncle; he looks just like him," said Polly mirthfully.

"Does your brother look like a pig?" Dick asked his sister.

Mrs. Shelton smiled as she looked at the handsome youth. "I don't detect a striking resemblance," she replied, rising to leave.

"Well, he acts like one sometimes," declared Polly. "I want to know, too," she went on, to her uncle, "if you have been telling Molly things about me that aren't so."

"He said you were wild as a March hare and looked like an Apache Indian," announced Molly from the other side of the chair, giving her uncle's hair a tweak.

"Two to one is not fair," cried Dick. "I draw the line at having my hair pulled out by the roots; it is quite enough to have my nose mauled all out of shape. Here, young woman, you must be kept in better order. Polly, you are setting a bad example to your cousin; never before has she

pulled my hair." He grabbed first one and then the other, stowed them away under his knees and held them tight.

"You're spoiling my clean frock," complained Polly. "Let me out and I'll not turn up your nose." Dick loosed his hold, "till the next time," added Polly darting away.

Dick made a grab for her and Molly, too, escaped. "Come back, come back!" cried Dick. "I have something for you, Molly, and you shall have it if you will answer me one question."

The girls slowly returned, but kept at a safe distance. "What is the question?" asked Molly.

Uncle Dick dived down into one of his pockets and drew forth a box of candy which he laid on the chair by his side. "I want to see how you are progressing with your studies," he remarked with gravity. "By the way, is school over yet?"

"No, it closes next week," Molly told him, eying the candy.

"Ah, then I must visit it and inquire into your record," said her uncle with an air of dignity.

"Oh, Uncle Dick!" Molly was on pins and needles lest he should really do something of the kind, and if he should hurt the feelings of her

dear Miss Isabel whom she adored, Molly did not know what she should do. Miss Isabel might not understand her uncle's joking ways and—oh, dear! Her anxious look made her uncle chuckle with glee.

"I'll go sure as a gun," he declared, seeing a chance to tease.

"Oh, please don't," begged Molly.

"Why not go? Indeed I shall. I am confident from your manner, Miss Shelton, that it really is necessary that I should make some inquiries for the credit of the family. Tell me why I should not go, if you please."

"Why—why—none of the girls' uncles ever do go," said Molly lamely.

"Not a bit of reason why I should not start the custom. What is your teacher like? Old, with little bobbing curls each side her face? Wears a cap, does she? or false frizzes and her teeth click when she talks?"

"She's nothing like that at all," returned Molly indignantly. "She is perfectly lovely with blue eyes and long black lashes, and the beautifullest hair, and she has the prettiest, whitest teeth, like even corn on the cob."

"My, oh, my! All the more must I go," said Dick. "Is she young, dear niece? How old might she be, darling Molly?"

"Oh, I don't know; I think about twenty-one, for she has only been teaching a year. She didn't leave college till last summer, and she told me she wasn't seventeen when she first went there."

"Delightful," said Uncle Dick meditatively. "Where is my sister? I must interest her in this matter. Now, Molly, sweet girl, answer my question and you shall have, not only this box of candy, but another to take to—what did I understand your teacher's name to be?"

"It is Isabel Ainslee, and it is a beautiful name."

"I quite agree with you. Now, Molly, answer me. How many cakes can you buy two for three cents apiece?"

Molly looked at Polly. This was a puzzler surely. "Two," she ventured uncertainly.

Uncle Dick looked at her penetratingly. "That might be the answer under some circumstances," he said.

This puzzled Molly more than ever and she looked at Polly for inspiration.

Polly was laughing. "You're an old fraud," she said to her uncle. "That is no question at all. It is nonsense, Molly. It depends entirely upon how much money you have. If you have six cents you can buy two cakes."

"So you can," returned Molly, seeing daylight. "I have just six cents, so I could buy two cakes at three cents apiece."

"But you didn't answer; it was Polly who did," said her uncle.

"Then Polly takes the candy," said that person darting forward and snatching up the candy box which she thrust into Molly's hand. "Here, Molly, run," she cried. And run Molly did, holding fast to the box and giving one backward glance at her uncle which showed him laughing and shaking his fist at the two retreating figures.

"Just wait till I see that Isabel Ainslee," he called after them. "I'll fix it for you, Molly Shelton."

But Molly had no fears, for Polly whispered: "He's only trying to tease, Molly. Don't mind him."

CHAPTER II

Uncle Dick at School

It wanted but a week of the time when the delightful season would begin which meant long days of freedom for the two little girls, for they were to spend the summer in a dear little cottage by the sea. Ever since Aunt Ada Reid bought her cottage it had been Molly's happy experience to spend the summer there, and to enjoy the delight of running wild. Polly was already enthusiastic but she became doubly so as the time approached and Molly dwelt upon the joys before them.

"We can run anywhere we like and nobody cares," Molly told her, "and there is so much to do the days never seem half long enough. Just this week of school, and then free! free! Uncle Dick didn't do as he threatened after all; he has not been to the school once."

"Oh, he has forgotten all about it," returned Polly.

But Uncle Dick had not forgotten, as the day's

proceedings proved. Polly was deeply interested in school matters, for she had been taught at home always, and knew nothing of routine and system, which, even in a small school, must be carried on. She had gone as a visitor with Molly when the rules were not so strictly enforced, for in the last warm days of the term Miss Ainslee was lenient and Polly thought school life perfectly delightful with easy lessons and ever so many interesting things said and done by both teacher and pupils.

The two little girls were sitting side by side, listening attentively to Miss Ainslee's account of the early Britons, when the door softly opened and a tall young man appeared. He looked smilingly around. Molly gave the stifled exclamation: "Uncle Dick!" Polly jumped to her feet but sat down again.

It was a hot morning. The breeze scarcely stirred the leaves of the wistaria vines over the windows. Once in a while a robin gurgled out his cheerful song which Molly always declared reminded her of cherry juice; the little girls in thin frocks fanned themselves behind the rows of desks. Miss Ainslee's back was toward the door

and she kept on with the reading, not having heard the intruder who presently made a step forward and gave a roguish glance in Molly's direction, to that young person's confusion, for the color mounted to her cheeks. What was he going to do she wondered. He gave an apologetic little cough which caused Miss Ainslee to look up from her book with a surprised expression.

"Isn't it most time for recess?" asked Uncle Dick gently.

Miss Ainslee glanced at the clock. "Why yes," she replied, her surprise more evident.

"That's what my sister said, and as it is such a warm morning we thought—she thought some ice cream would be refreshing to you all, so she has sent over a freezer; I told the man to set it outside."

Pleased giggles issued from the little girls behind the desks.

"I never thought," continued Dick, "but perhaps I ought—we ought to have furnished dishes and spoons. You couldn't eat it from the ink-wells, I suppose." He turned to the children who again giggled delightedly.

"Oh, I think we can manage in an emergency," said Miss Ainslee. "We have a small cooking class here on Saturday mornings and there is quite a supply of dishes in the cupboard yonder. I think we can make them go around."

Dick's smile grew wistful as he said: "It was pretty hot coming over here, but I don't suppose you could ask me to have some of the cream with you; I'm not a little girl, you know, and I perceive you don't take boys."

A tremulous little smile danced about the corners of Miss Ainslee's mouth as she moved toward the cupboard.

"I could help to dish it out at least," Dick added hastily. "I could do that beautifully, couldn't I, Polly?" He turned to his niece.

"Oh, you are Molly's uncle, aren't you?" The puzzled expression with which Miss Ainslee was regarding him changed to one of understanding "She has been talking of you for the past month. Certainly stay. I shall be very glad of your help."

Dick cast a triumphant look at Molly. "Then I'll go right out and take off the ice from the

freezer," he said. "Will you have the cream in here or out there?"

"Out there, I think," returned Miss Ainslee. "I like the children to take their recess out of doors whenever they can. I will bring out the plates and spoons."

"No, don't," said Dick. "Just show me where they are. Oh, I see: among the gallipots and things. You please go and get the kids—I mean the little girls all settled and I will play butler."

To this Miss Ainslee would not consent, but she dismissed the children who fled out with excited whispers, and presently, to their great satisfaction, they were served with heaping saucers of ice cream and delicious little cakes. Once or twice Molly and Polly ventured near to where their uncle and Miss Ainslee were sitting under a great tree, but each time that they appeared Uncle Dick would say in a strong voice: "I want to inquire about Molly's marks, Miss Ainslee. How is she getting on with her arithmetic?" As this was Molly's bugbear, she would move off hastily whenever the study was mentioned while Uncle Dick looked after her with a twinkle in his eye. He politely took his leave

after recess was over, though some of Molly's friends clamored for him to stay and tell them stories of the great west, for they had heard of his powers in that direction. He refused to stay, however, though he promised that he would come again, if Miss Ainslee would permit.

The girls all gathered around their teacher when the visitor had gone, and were loud in their praises of Molly Shelton's uncle. But Molly herself said never a word, though after school was dismissed she crept up to Miss Ainslee and whispered: "Did you tell him I never do get half my examples right?"

Miss Ainslee put her arm around her and whispered back: "No, dear, I didn't, for it wouldn't have been true. Sometimes you do get more than half of them right."

"I do try," said Molly wistfully.

"I know you do," returned Miss Ainslee, giving her a hug. So Molly went home satisfied that after all her uncle's visit to the school meant only good will and not a desire to discover the weak spots in his niece's record.

Uncle Dick made a second visit to the school at another recess hour when it threatened rain

and he brought umbrellas for Molly and Polly, and rain it did, coming down in such torrents for a while that he accepted the shelter offered, and, while the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed, told the children such thrilling stories as completely absorbed the attention of the whole school, and no one thought of being afraid of the storm.

Then came the last day of the term when Uncle Dick, as invited guest, came with Mrs. Shelton to see the pretty Garden of Verses which Miss Ainslee had arranged for the closing entertainment. Even Polly took part in that and repeated the lines:

"A birdie with a yellow bill
Hopped upon the window sill,
Cocked his shining eye and said,
'Ain't you 'shamed, you sleepy-head!'"

while Molly, wearing a long silken gown, swept in with rustling skirt to say:

"Whenever auntie moves around
Her dresses make a curious sound;
They trail behind her up the floor,
And trundle after through the door."

She was called to the front of the little stage

to receive the bunch of lovely roses her Uncle Dick sent her, and felt very grand when they were handed up to her. Polly, too, came in for her share of flowers, though hers were sweet-peas because her name began with P. However, that did not account for the white bell-like blossoms which were presented to Miss Ainslee, though Polly explained it by saying, "She is a belle, you know," and did not see the whole joke till she remembered Miss Ainslee's first name.

To Polly, Miss Ainslee was a paragon of perfection. She had never before known so dainty and pretty a young lady. The tutor which she and her brothers had was a young man who had gone to Colorado for his health, and when stranded in Denver was chanced upon by Dick Reid who befriended him and brought him home, where he was glad enough to teach the niece and nephews of his former college mate. Miss Ainslee was a teacher of quite another stamp and ardent little Polly adored her.

When the little girls had returned from the closing exercises of the school, their thoughts turned to the next excitement which was the journey northward with Uncle Dick. They were

to start the very next morning, and their trunks stood ready to go.

As they entered the hall, Mrs. Shelton picked up a letter which the postman had just brought. It had a foreign postmark, and Molly knew it must be from her Aunt Evelyn, her Uncle Arthur's wife, who lived in England. Mrs. Shelton sat down in the library and opened the letter. She had read only a few lines when she exclaimed: "Well, I declare!"

"What is it, mother?" asked Molly. "What does Aunt Evelyn say? How is Mary?"

"She is better, and what do you think, Molly? Uncle Arthur is coming over and is going to bring Mary with him. They are on their way."

"Oh, Polly! Polly!" cried Molly, "what do you think? Our Cousin Mary is coming. Three Marys in one house and all named after the same grandmother. Tell us more, mother. When are they coming and how long are they going to stay, and all about it. Are they going to Aunt Ada's with us?"

"Wait a minute," said Mrs. Shelton, scanning the final page of her letter. Molly watched her till she read the last word. "It is this way,"

Mrs. Shelton told her; "your Uncle Arthur has to come to America on business and Mary, you know, has not been very well, so when the doctor advised a sea voyage, Uncle Arthur decided to bring Mary with him and leave her with some of us while he should travel about to look after his business matters. It was all determined upon very hurriedly and Aunt Evelyn is much concerned lest she is giving us a charge we may not wish to undertake. However, I shall hasten to let her know that we shall be delighted to welcome Mary. My own little niece whom I have never seen! It is a great happiness to have both my nieces here this summer." She smiled at Polly.

"But when is she coming?" asked Molly.

"In about a week I should judge."

"Oh, we will be gone then," said Molly, turning to Polly. She hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry of the fact.

"I am glad I determined to wait a little later before going away with your father," continued Mrs. Shelton, "for now I shall be here to receive Arthur and Mary, and can bring Mary up with me on the way to Rangeley. Aunt Ada will be

perfectly delighted to know she is to have a visit from Mary, for she has asked so many times that her parents would lend her for a summer."

"It will be just lovely to expect her," said Molly hospitably. "I do hope we shall like her, mother, and that she will be as easy to get acquainted with as Polly is. I feel as if I had always known Polly; she is just like a sister."

"I fancy you will find Mary somewhat different from Polly," said Mrs. Shelton, remembering her sister-in-law's exact little ways, and thinking of Polly's unfettered life on the ranch. "However, I am sure she is a dear child and that we shall love her very dearly."

"I wish she had been here to see the Garden of Verses and our costumes," said Polly, who was quite carried away by the morning's performance.

"Oh, I suppose she sees much finer things in England," said Molly. "I suppose she dresses much finer, too, than we do. Why, there are kings and queens and princesses over there, and they wear ermine and crowns and tiaras."

"I haven't the least idea what a tiara is," said Polly.

"I don't know exactly myself," acknowledged

Molly, "but I know it is something you wear on your head and it is studded with diamonds or some kind of precious stones."

"Maybe it is some kind of hat," ventured Polly.

Molly wasn't quite sure, but she wondered if Mary would have one. "At least she can tell us what it is like," she remarked to Polly.

Mrs. Shelton had hurried from the room to tell the news to her brother and the little girls were left in the library alone. Molly was thinking very seriously. Presently she said: "Polly Perrine, if you will never, never tell any one, I'll tell you something. Cross your heart you won't tell."

Polly promptly crossed her heart. "I won't tell," she assured her cousin.

"Then," said Molly looking furtively around, "I am not sure I am glad Mary is coming."

"Oh, why not?" asked Polly, looking the least bit shocked.

"Why, she may be prim and fusty and spoil our plays. I notice often that two girls can play together beautifully, but when a third one comes she is sure to want to do something that one of the others doesn't like and either breaks up the

play or gets mad and goes off making you feel sort of hurt and queer inside. You know it is hard to please everybody and the more people you have to please the harder it is."

Polly pondered upon this philosophy of her cousin's. "Well," she said finally, "perhaps if she doesn't like to play our way, she can find some one else to play with."

"Of course she can. I never thought of that," said Molly in a relieved tone. "I remember now before I knew you were coming mother told me that Mrs. Wharton was going to have her granddaughter with her this summer, and I was very glad because the Mowbrays have gone abroad, and I expected to have them to play with. Now we can pair off; you and I can go together and Mary can go with Grace Wharton. I don't suppose," she added after a minute, "that it would be quite polite always to have it that way, for Mary is our own cousin and we can't shove her off on a stranger."

"Maybe we shall not want to," said Polly. "If she is real nice, Molly, we won't mind taking turns, or we can all three play together when the Wharton girl isn't there."

CHAPTER III

Mary

A WEEK later the family was settled for the summer in Miss Ada Reid's cottage by the sea. In front of them was a stretch of green; beyond were the jagged rocks, and then came the ocean. The landing was some distance from the cottage and was upon the bay side of the peninsula, so, although Polly had caught glimpses of the sea during her journey, she did not have a clear view of the wide expanse until they had nearly reached the house and the great blue ocean spread out before her. Then she danced up and down with sheer joy.

"It is just as big and just as blue as I thought," she cried. "Oh, I am so happy! I am so happy!"

Molly was delighted at Polly's enthusiasm, for she, too, loved the sea and the rocks and the wide stretches of grassy hummocks. "There is the cottage," she told her cousin; "the one peeping over that little hill. It looks just like a

brownie, doesn't it, with its surprised window-eyes? I always call the cottage 'The Brownie,' and Aunt Ada says it is a very good name for it, because it is a sort of brown."

"I should call it gray," said Polly.

"It is really gray, but it is a sort of brownish gray, and anyhow I like the name of Brownie for it. There is Aunt Ada on the porch watching for us."

Miss Reid came running out to meet them. She gave Molly a hug and a kiss and then turned to her other niece. "And this is our Polly, isn't it?" she said. "Bless the dear; I am so glad to see her. Come along in all of you; I know you are as hungry as hunters and I have dinner all waiting."

"Oh, Aunt Ada, is there to be baked mackerel?" asked Molly.

"Yes, and lobster salad, too."

"Are the wild roses in bloom yet, and are the wild strawberries ripe?" queried Molly.

"The strawberries are trying to get ripe, but I haven't seen a single wild rose yet. Come right in; I know by Dick's eager look that he is ready for my baked mackerel. I have Luella

Barnes to help me this year," she whispered, "and she has a big white satin bow in her hair because we have a young man as guest." She laughed mirthfully and Polly thought the way her eyes squeezed up was perfectly fascinating. Her Aunt Ada had visited Colorado when Polly was a baby, but, of course, Polly did not remember it, nor would her aunt have recognized her baby niece in the little rosy-cheeked girl before her.

"This is something like our house," said Polly, looking around with a pleased expression at the unplastered room with its simple furnishings.

"Then you will feel at home," said her aunt. "Take off your hats, girlies, while I see to dinner, for you know the necessity, Molly, of looking after things yourself up this way."

Just here Luella appeared. She was a tall, angular young woman with a mass of fair hair, very blue eyes and a tiny waist. The white satin bow was conspicuous, and as she caught sight of Dick Reid she simpered and giggled in what the little girls thought a very silly way since it displayed Luella's bad teeth to which she evidently never gave the least attention. However, they

all soon forgot everything but satisfying their appetites with the baked mackerel, deliciously fresh, the roasted potatoes, young peas and lobster salad.

"These taste so different from canned things," said Polly, passing up her plate for a second helping of lobster.

Luella reached out a bony arm and took the plate. "I'm glad to see you can eat hearty," she remarked. "Give her a real good help, Mr. Reid."

Molly giggled, though she knew the ways of the "hired help" her aunt employed in the summer. Aunt Ada gave her a warning look, for the natives were quick to take offense and Miss Ada had no wish to be left with no one in the kitchen. "And when is Mary coming?" she asked.

"Oh, we don't know exactly," Molly told her. "Mother will bring her up when she and papa go to Rangeley. Mother thought it would be in about a week. What will you do with three little girls to look after, Aunt Ada?"

"Oh, I expect them to look after me," returned Miss Ada.

"And if they don't do that properly, or if they get obstreperous," put in Uncle Dick, "it is the easiest thing in the world to throw them overboard. I'll do it for you, Ada; the rocks are very handy, and it will not be much of a job."

Polly made a face at him. "I know how much you'll throw us over," she said. "You'd better not try it with me, you sinful evil-doer."

"You see what is before you, Ada," said Dick. "You'll rue the day you consented to have three nieces with you for a whole summer; yet," he shook his head and said darkly, "I know what can be done if worse comes to worst."

"What then, Mr. Dicky-Picky?" said Polly.

"That's for me to know and for you to find out," he replied.

"My, ain't she sassy?" said Luella in a loud whisper to Miss Ada, "but then he ain't no more'n a boy the way he talks."

This was too much for Dick who could not keep his face straight as he rose from the table quickly. "Who's for the rocks, the cove or the woods?" he asked.

"The rocks, the rocks, first," cried both little girls.

"I want to show Polly the dear little pools where the star-fish are, and the cave under the rocks where we found the sea-urchins and where those queer bluey, diamondy shining things are," said Molly.

Polly squeezed her hand. "Oh, I'm so excited," she said. "I have been just wild to see all those things."

"You shall see them in short order," her uncle told her. "We keep our aquarium in the front garden."

"Where is the garden?" asked Polly innocently.

Her uncle laughed as he led the way over the hummocks down the rugged path to the rocks. Here they clambered over crags and barnacled boulders till they came to a quiet pool reflecting the blue of the sky. Its sides were fringed with floating sea-weeds and it was peopled by many sorts of strange creatures which thrived upon the supplies brought in by the ocean with its tides. A green crab scuttled out of sight under some pebbles; a purple star-fish crept softly from behind a bunch of waving crimson weeds: a sea-

anemone opened and shut its living petals; by peering under the shelving rock one could see the dainty shell of a sea-urchin.

Polly gazed astonished at the pool's wonders. "It is like fairy-land," she whispered. "I never saw anything so beautiful. Can we come here every day and will the little pools with these queer creatures always be just this way?"

"We can always come at low tide," Molly told her.

"Then I'll always come down here at this time every day."

"But it will not be low tide always at this time," said Molly.

"Oh, won't it?" returned inland little Polly, quite taken aback. "Why won't it?"

Then her uncle told her how the coming in of the tide changes just as the rising of the moon does, and that one must know the difference in time to be sure. Then he went on to explain something about the small creatures which inhabited the pools, the barnacles which covered the rocks up to a certain point.

"Why don't the barnacles go any higher?"

asked Polly. "I should think they would grow and grow just like grass does over bare places in the ground.

"They extend only to high water-mark," her uncle told her, "for you see they are fed by the ocean. If you will watch closely, you can see them open and close as the waves come and go."

"Isn't it wonderful?" said Polly in an awe-struck voice.

"I like it best when the tide is up," remarked Molly, "for I don't think all that dark sea-weed that covers the rocks is very pretty."

Polly looked down at the long ropes of sea-weed which clung to the craggy places beneath them. "It makes the rocks look just like buffaloes or some strange kind of animals," she said. "I shall call that Buffalo Rock, and that other the Lion's Den, for it looks like a lion lying down."

"There is a dear place further down," said Molly. "It is sheltered from the wind and we have tea there sometimes. There is a cunning fireplace that Uncle Dick built there last year. I wonder if it is still standing. Let's go and see."

They followed the shore a little further and found a flat rock not far below the top of the bluff. The fireplace was nearly as they had left it, and only required a few stones to make it as good as new. Molly viewed it with a satisfied air as her uncle topped it with a final stone. "There," she exclaimed, "it is ready for our first afternoon tea! We'll toast marshmallows, too, as soon as we can get some at the store."

"Why can't we get them to-day?" asked Polly who did not want to put off such a pleasure.

"Because Mr. Hobbs never has any before the Fourth of July. He always gets in his good things then, but never a day sooner or later. I know him of old," said Dick.

"By that time Mary will be here," said Molly thoughtfully, "and we can have our first tea-party in her honor."

"Yes, and she can help us make our Fourth," said Uncle Dick, laughing. "She has never known our great and glorious Fourth over there in England."

"Of course not," said Polly. "I forgot she was a wicked Britisher."

"Not very wicked," said Uncle Dick.

"But we must never let her think we have any grudge against her because we were the ones that won the Revolution," said Molly. "It wouldn't be polite to pick at her because she isn't an American. Do you suppose she will be very snippy, Polly? and will be disagreeable and run down America?"

"Oh, my, I hope not; I'd hate her to be that way," returned Polly alarmed at such a prospect. "It would be dreadful for us to be quarreling all the time and of course we couldn't keep still if she runs down our country. What shall we do if she does?"

"Send her to me," said Uncle Dick.

This settled the matter and was a relief to both little girls, who considered that what Uncle Dick didn't know was not worth knowing, besides he had a smiling way of putting down persons who bragged too much, as the cousins well knew.

"I am just crazy to see her, and yet somehow I dread it," Polly told Molly.

Molly confessed to much the same feeling and declared that she would be glad when the first

meeting was over and they were all acquainted. Then she undertook to show Polly more of her favorite haunts and it was suppertime before they had begun to see all they wished to.

The next week Mary arrived with Mrs. Shelton who remained but a short time before she resumed her journey. Mary was a slim, pale, plainly-dressed little girl who looked not at all as her cousins imagined. She did not seem shy but she had little to say at first, sitting by herself in a corner of the porch as soon as dinner was over and answering only such questions as were put to her.

"Did you have a pleasant trip?" asked Molly by way of beginning the acquaintance.

"No," returned Mary. "Fancy being seasick nearly all the way."

"Oh, were you? Wasn't that disagreeable?"

"Most disagreeable," returned Mary.

There was silence for a few minutes and then Mary put her first question: "Do you always eat your meals with your parents, or only when you are at a curious place like this?"

"Why, we always do," Polly answered.

"Where would you expect us to eat them? In the kitchen?"

"No," returned Mary; "in the nursery."

"There is no nursery here, you know," Molly informed her.

"Yes, I know; that is why I asked. But in the city, or in your own home you have a nursery?"

"Yes, we have," Polly told her, "but we don't eat there."

"Really?" Mary looked much surprised. "And do you come to the table with the grown persons?"

"Why, certainly."

"How curious!"

Polly looked at Molly. "Don't you ever go to the table with your parents?" asked Polly.

"Sometimes we go for dessert."

"Well," returned Polly, "if I couldn't stay all the time, I must say I'd like better to come in for dessert than just for soup."

Mary looked serious, but Molly laughed. "Don't you want to go down on the rocks with us?" asked the latter.

"I think I would prefer to sit here," said Mary.

"All by yourself?" said Molly, surprised.

"Oh, yes, I like to be alone."

This was too decided a hint for the others not to take, so they marched off together. "Well," said Polly when they were out of hearing, "I don't think much of her manners, and I don't think I shall trouble her much with my company. She likes to be alone; well, she will be, as far as I am concerned."

"Oh, she feels strange at first," said Molly by way of excusing her English cousin. "After while she will be more 'folksy,' as Luella says."

"Well then, when she wants to come with us she can say so. I shall not ask her, I know. She is just like what I was afraid she would be: stand-offish and airish. She reminds me of 'the cat that walks by herself.' I was always afraid the girls I might meet would be that way."

At this Molly looked quite hurt.

"Oh, I don't mean you," Polly went on, putting her arm around her cousin to reassure her. "You are just dear, Molly. I loved you right away."

Molly's hurt feelings disappeared at this. "I am sure," she remarked, "Mary needn't be so high

and mighty ; she hasn't half as pretty clothes as we have."

"And she doesn't look nice in those she does have," returned Polly.

From this the two went on from one criticism to another till finally they worked themselves up into quite hard feelings against Mary, and resolved to let her quite alone and not invite her to join their plays. This plan they began to carry out the next day to such a marked extent that their Aunt Ada noticed it.

"I did suppose Molly and Polly would want to show more hospitality to their little English cousin," she said to her brother.

Dick smiled. "They will in time," he said. "A dose of their own medicine might do them good."

"Perhaps Mary has really said something to offend them," said Miss Ada thoughtfully, "or possibly they misunderstand each other's ways. I will watch them for a day or two and try to discover what is wrong." She kept Mary at her side after this, and when she was not doing something to entertain her, Dick was, till both Molly and Polly began to add jealous pangs to their other

grievances, yet they would only sidle up to their aunt and uncle or would sit near enough to hear what was said without joining in the conversation.

"They are jealous; that's what it is, poor dears," said their aunt to herself. "I must gather them all together in some way." So the next evening when she and Mary were established in a cozy corner by the open fire, she called the other two little girls. "Come here, lassies. Mary has been telling me some very interesting things about England. Don't you want to hear them, too?"

Molly and Polly came nearer and sat on the edge of the wood-box together.

"Now," said Miss Ada, "I think it would be a good way to pass the time if each were to tell her most exciting experience. Mary can tell of something that happened to her in England; Polly can give us some experience of hers in Colorado, and Molly can choose her own locality. Molly, you are the eldest by a month or two, you can begin."

Molly was silent for a few minutes and then she began. "My most exciting time was last

fall when we were going home from here. We took the early boat, you remember, Aunt Ada, and the sea was very rough. We were about half way to the city when a tremendous wave rushed toward us and we were all thrown down on deck. I went banging against the rail, but Uncle Dick caught me, though he said if the rail hadn't been strong we all might have been washed off into the sea. It was two or three minutes before we could get to our feet and I was awfully scared; so was everybody."

"It was not rough at all when we came down here from the city," remarked Mary.

"It is usually very smooth," said Miss Ada, "but the time of which Molly speaks it was unusually rough and we all had reason to be terrified. Now your tale, Polly."

Polly sat looking into the fire for a moment before she said, "I think the time I was most scared was once when Uncle Dick and I were riding home on our ponies. It was most dark and the sun was dropping behind the mountains; it always seems lonely and solemn then anyhow. I wasn't riding my own pony that day for he had hurt his foot, so I had Buster, Ted's broncho;

I'd often been on him before and I wasn't a bit afraid to ride him. Well, we were coming along pretty fast because it was getting so late and we were a good distance from home. Of course there were no houses nearer than ours, and that was three miles away. I was a little ahead when a jack-rabbit jumped up right before Buster's nose and he lit out and ran for all he was worth. I held on tight, but he kept running and pretty soon I saw we were making toward a bunch of cattle. Buster used to be a cattle pony and I thought: suppose that bunch should stampede and I should get into the thick of them. I was always more scared of a stampede than anything else. Well, the cattle did begin to run but I jerked at Buster's bridle and managed to work him little by little away from the cattle, but he never stopped running till we got home and then I just tumbled off on the ground, somehow, and sat there crying till Uncle Dick came up. He had no idea that Buster was doing anything I didn't want him to, but just thought I was going fast for a joke and because I wanted to get home."

"I think that was tremendously exciting," commented Molly, "and I think you were very

brave, for it lasted so long. It is easy to be brave for a minute, but not for so long."

"Fancy living in such a wild country," remarked Mary.

"Oh, but it is beautiful," said Polly enthusiastically. "The mountains are bigger than anything you can imagine, and it is so fine and free. Oh, you don't know till you see it."

"I am quite sure I should like England better," declared Mary positively. "London is much finer than New York, which is very ugly, I think, and our dear little villages are so pretty. I never saw such queer tumble-down places as you have here in the country. I think our hedge-rows and lanes are much prettier."

"Never mind, now," said Miss Ada gently. "Tell us about your most exciting time."

"Really, I never did anything very exciting, you know," returned Mary. "Once I was in Kensington Gardens and got lost from nurse. I was frightfully scared for a little while. However, I sat quite still and she came up after a bit."

Molly gave Polly a little nudge; it seemed a very tame experience after Polly's wild ride.

CHAPTER IV

The Rhinestone Pin

In spite of Miss Ada's efforts to bring the three little cousins nearer together, it was some time before they actually did become real friends: Mary, seeing that anything she could say against America aroused a fierce contradiction from Polly, slyly teased her whenever she could, and Polly, who was loyal to the backbone, grew more and more indignant, often on the verge of tears, rushing to her aunt or uncle with a tale of Mary's abuse of her beloved country.

"And her father is an American, too. I don't see how she can do it," she complained one morning. "She is half American herself, and I told her so."

"What did she say?" asked Aunt Ada.

"She said she was born in England and so was her mother, so of course she was English, and besides, although her father was once American, that now he lives in England so he must be Eng-

lish, too. She makes fun of everything, or at least she sniffs at us and our ways all the time. Now, is that polite, Aunt Ada? I live in the west, but I'd be ashamed to make fun of the east."

"I think Mary will learn better after awhile, when she has been here longer."

"I wish I could show her what my mother wrote to me in the letter that I had from her this morning," said Polly. Then, with a sudden thought. "Aunt Ada, won't you read it aloud to all three of us?"

"Bring it to me," said Miss Ada, "and I will see."

Polly ran off and came back with the letter which her aunt read over carefully, nodding approvingly from time to time. "Where are the others?" she asked presently.

"Out on the porch," Polly told her.

Miss Ada picked up her knitting bag and Polly followed her to a sheltered corner where Molly and Mary were playing with a store of pebbles they had picked up on the shore.

"Polly has had such a nice letter from her mother," said Miss Ada. "Don't you all want

to hear it? She gives such interesting accounts of things out there, and Mary will get quite an idea of ranch life from it." She sat down and read the pages which were full of a pleasant recital of every-day doings, interesting to those unaccustomed to the great west, and more interesting to Polly. At the last came these words: "There is one thing I want my little girl to remember: the essence of good breeding comes from a good heart. It is both unkind and ill-bred to give offense in a house where hospitality is shown you, to find fault or criticise what is set before you, to draw comparisons between the locality where you live and that which you are visiting so that the latter will appear in a bad light. Persons who have not been accustomed to the society of well-bred people think it is very smart to find fault with things which are different from those with which they have been familiar. Now, I don't want my Polly to be that way, and I must ask her not to be so rude as to abuse hospitality by belittling the customs of a house or the town, state or locality in which it is. I want my Polly to be considered a true lady, even if she is from the wild and woolly west."

Mary looked a little startled while this reading was going on and when Polly stole a glance at her she became very red in the face and turned away her head, but to Polly's great satisfaction, from that time she was less ready to criticise things American. In consequence warm-hearted little Polly tried to be magnanimous and because Aunt Ada asked her to help her to show a generous hospitality, she overlooked Mary's praise of England, and would answer her remarks by saying: "Well, we have some nice things, too." Her clear loud voice, moreover, she tried to tone down when Aunt Ada told her to notice the difference between her way of speaking and Mary's. As to Mary the benefits of her visit were only beginning to tell. Later they showed more plainly, but it was not till there was much heart-burning and many tears were shed.

It all began in this way: Molly rushed in one morning, her face all aglow with the importance of the news she had to tell. "Oh, Aunt Ada," she cried, "they are going to have a dress-up party at Green Island hall, fancy costumes, you know, and we are all invited, you and Uncle Dick and we children. The Ludlows have come and

it is Miss Kitty's birthday. Will you go? and what can we wear?"

"Oh, mayn't I be a grown up lady and wear a long skirt?" asked Mary. "I have always longed to do that."

"Why, I am sure I don't object," replied Miss Ada. "Tell me more about it, Molly. Where did you find out all this?"

"I met Edgar Ludlow just now, and he gave me this note," and Molly thrust an envelope into her aunt's hand. "He told me all about the party."

Miss Ada opened the note and read:

"DEAR ADA:

"Come over to the hall to-morrow night, you and your brother, and bring the youngsters. We are going to celebrate my birthday by dressing up in any old thing we can find around the house Come in any character you choose, from the Queen of Sheba to a beggar maid, only don't fail to come and bring the girlies

"Lovingly,
"KITTY."

The three cousins watched their aunt's face anxiously. "You will go, won't you, Aunt Ada?" asked Polly.

"I most certainly will. The first thing to do is to see what odds and ends I have in the attic."

From this time on for the next two days there was great excitement everywhere in the house, for with five costumes to devise out of scraps, Miss Ada had her hands full. But when the moment came for them all to start forth, each one had been provided with something suitable. Miss Ada herself wore a Puritan cap and kerchief which distinguished her as Priscilla, the Puritan maiden; Uncle Dick looked stunning, his nieces agreed, as a Venetian gondolier; Mary was perfectly happy with a long trained skirt, short waist and powdered hair, her crowning glory being a pin which her aunt had lent her; it was set with rhinestones, which in her innocence she mistook for real diamonds, but she was so delighted with the shining brilliants that Miss Ada did not have the heart to undeceive her. Polly insisted upon going as the wild Indian her uncle had suggested to Molly that she looked like, and though her costume did not accord very well with her fair hair, she was painted up skilfully and with blanket, beads and moccasins was quite content. Molly made a pretty butterfly with yel-

low paper wings, and as they all set out across the hummocks to the little landing every one was entirely satisfied. Green Island was not far away, and, as it was bright moonlight these nights, no one minded the trip across the narrow channel between the point and the island. The little hall was gay with decorations of Japanese lanterns and wild flowers, and looked so festive that even Mary declared it was perfectly lovely.

There were not very many children present, and the cousins felt quite like grown-ups when they danced with Uncle Dick and other young men of his age, the music being furnished by whoever would volunteer to play two-steps and waltzes. Mary felt the necessity of crossing the room a great many times that she might have the pleasant consciousness of the train sweeping behind her. Polly as a dancer did not excel except in funny whirls and figures and in a Spanish dance which she had learned from her father's Mexican servants, and which won her great applause. Molly had danced often enough in this very hall to which she had gone every summer since she could dance at all.

It was Mary's first experience of such an affair

where young and old shared the entertainment. Never before had she been to any such assemblage which was not intended for children alone, and while for some time her friends had been slowly converting her to a more flattering view of American ways, this completely won her heart, and at once all her childish home festivities paled before it. In her enthusiasm she turned to Polly and said: "Oh, I do love America!" and Polly, unmindful of her painted face, threw her arms about her and kissed her.

At ten o'clock the guests departed, and after their water trip in a small motor boat, they went stumbling home by the light of the moon.

Luella was there to welcome them, eager to hear all the account of the evening's doings. "You summer folks beat me out!" she exclaimed. "Land! to see you rig up in all this trash and dance them funny dances is as good as a circus. I was watching you through the windows, me and some of the other girls."

"Was Granville there?" asked Polly.

"You go 'long," returned Luella, coyly. "I won't tell you whether he was or not." The girls were much interested in the young fisher-

man who saw Luella home every night, and thought his high-sounding name beautiful. Luella had confided to Polly that they were going to get married some day and that she had already begun to piece her quilts.

It was something of a task to get off their toggery and to rid themselves of paint and powder, but finally the butterfly wings were unfastened, the powder shaken from Mary's locks and the red paint washed from Polly's face and hands. It was during the process of undressing, however, that Mary made a discovery which took away all the joy of her evening. The beautiful shining pin was gone! She clutched the front of her frock where it had been pinned; she examined the fall of lace; she shook out the folds of the skirt. In her distress and fear she commenced to search eagerly around on the floor with her candle.

"What are you looking for?" called Polly from the next room.

"I have dropped a pin," said Mary, in agitation.

"Well, I wouldn't fuss about it; the mice won't eat it up," said Polly, sleepily, "and noth-

ing will carry it off in the night. Wait till morning and it will be just where you dropped it, just the same."

This Mary felt to be the truth, and she finally crept into bed, still miserable, but hopeful and determined to waken early to make a search for the precious pin.

As soon as the sun showed its golden disc over the edge of the ocean she was up, creeping softly around the room on her hands and knees, and trying not to waken her sleeping cousins in the next room. At last, after she had searched in every possible nook and cranny, she concluded that she must have lost it on the stairs or on her way home, so, after dressing herself, she stole downstairs, looking upon each step as she went, then through the living-room and out on the porch.

The air was soft and sweet. The song-sparrows were singing from the house-tops; across the ocean the sun shone gloriously, and pouring its beams upon the dew-sprinkled grass, turned their blades into sparkling sheaths which mocked poor Mary, searching for false diamonds. No one was in sight but a lobsterman out in his dory. From one or two chimneys the smoke

was beginning to curl, showing that there were other early risers. Mary stepped along anxiously, looking this side and that, and with her hands pushing the grass aside in places. Little by little she made her way toward the landing. She would search so far and if it were not to be found this side the separating channel of water she would trust to luck to take her to the island later.

But no pin was to be found that morning, hunt faithfully though she did, and the child returned to the cottage in great distress of mind. She was afraid to confess the loss to her aunt, and she could not make up her mind to tell one of her cousins. "I must find it! I must!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands as she left the last turnstile behind her. "I hope, I do hope Aunt Ada will not ask for it first thing this morning."

This Aunt Ada did not do, thinking, indeed, no more of the little trinket after having pinned it into Mary's frock. No one noticed that the little girl was very quiet at the breakfast table, for all were talking merrily over the fun of the evening before, and no one observed Mary's

troubled little face nor the fact that she scarcely tasted her breakfast. Her Uncle Dick, however, at last did remark that Mary had not much to say. "I am afraid grown-up parties are too much for Mary," he said, after breakfast, drawing her to his side in the hammock and cuddling her to him. "Are you sleepy, Mary, or don't you feel well?"

Mary leaned her head against his shoulder. "I don't feel sleepy," she told him, "and I am only a bit tired. Uncle Dick, are diamonds the preciousest things in the world?"

"Those glittering out there on the grass, do you mean? They are fairy diamonds, you know, and they disappear as soon as the sun gets high up."

"I know. I didn't mean those; I meant the kind human people wear."

"They are sold at rather a respectable price. Are you thinking of investing or are you considering the display Miss Millikin made last night? I think I counted thirteen on one hand. All are not diamonds that glitter, Marybud. Miss Millikin isn't a bit more precious because of her diamonds, so don't you go thinking I'll

love you any better if you have six diamond rings on one hand."

"But they are most costly, aren't they?"

"They cost like fury. That's why I can't be engaged to a girl; I can't afford to buy a ring."

Mary took this perfectly seriously. "I suppose six little diamonds would cost as much as twenty pounds," she said.

"Yes, one might get six, not too big, for that price. The little ones cost much less than the big one in proportion. A large solitaire costs much more than a number of small ones taking up as much space. But why this sudden interest in diamonds? Have you twenty pounds to spend and are you thinking of spending it all in diamonds to take home as a gift to your mother?"

"Oh, no, I have only one pound to spend, and mamma wouldn't wish me to spend all that upon her."

"Then let's talk of something else; song-sparrows or sand peeps or sea gulls, or something not so sordid as gold and diamonds. Look at that yacht out there, isn't it a corker?

Now, when I have money to spend I shall not buy diamonds, I shall buy a yacht. By the way, did you know we were all going out sailing this afternoon, to Rocky Point?"

"Are we?" said Mary listlessly.

"Why I thought you would enjoy it. We have been talking of this sail for two or three days, and you little kitties were wild about it, I thought."

"I am delighted; of course I am," returned Mary with more show of interest. "Shall we take supper there? I heard Aunt Ada and Luella talking about sandwiches."

"Yes, that is the intention. We shall not try sailing by the outside route but will go around by Middle Bay where it is not rough. Polly has not tried sailing yet, and we must be sure of smooth waters. If it gets too much for her we can set her ashore somewhere and she can come back by the next steamboat. She is calling you now."

Mary slipped away to join Polly and Molly. "We are going to look for wild strawberries," they said; "Aunt Ada said we might."

"I'm going barefoot," Polly informed her,

"but Molly won't; she is afraid of taking cold; you aren't, are you, Mary?"

Mary was most decided in her refusal to take off her shoes and stockings, declaring that her mother would certainly disapprove, but her heart leaped within her when told that they were to look for strawberries. She would then have an excuse to continue her search for the lost pin, and therefore she set for herself the bounds which included the path to the landing But it must be confessed that she found few strawberries and was crowed over by the others.

"You might have known you couldn't find near so many there along the path," Polly told her. "Why, they are as thick as can be over there where nobody walks."

Mary made no excuse for her choice, and indeed made no reply.

"You aren't mad, are you?" asked Polly after looking at her for a moment.

Mary shook her head.

"Tell me, are you homesick, Mary? I won't tell any one if that is what is the matter."

Again only a shake of the head in reply.

"Well, you needn't tell if you don't want

to," said Polly, walking off. She was a quick-tempered little soul, easily offended, and when Mary decided that she would rather stay at home with Luella that afternoon, than run the risk of being seasick, Polly made up her mind that either Mary really was homesick, or that she did not care for the society of her American cousins.

"I'm not going to insist on playing with her. She needn't think I'm so crazy about it that I can't keep away from her," she confided to Molly after they had set sail.

"Oh, but maybe she really is homesick," said Molly, "and maybe we ought not to have gone away and left her."

"But Uncle Dick and Aunt Ada said we should."

"That was because Mary was so determined not to go. She was seasick nearly all the way coming from England, and Aunt Ada thinks that is why she was afraid to go to-day."

"Oh, nonsense! Nobody could be seasick on this smooth water," said Polly, looking over the side of the boat at the blue waves. "Isn't it jolly, Molly?"

"Jolly Molly sounds funny," laughed Molly.

"So does jolly Polly," returned Polly. Then, fumbling in her uncle's pocket, she found a bit of paper and a pencil; in a moment she handed to Molly the following brilliant production:

"Golly, Molly,
It's jolly,
Polly

This sent them both into shrieks of merriment, for it took very little to start the two laughing, and they soon forgot Mary.

"Look here," called Uncle Dick, "I shall have to make you two laugh the other side of the mouth, for you're tipping the boat all to one side. Shift them a little bit further, Ada. We're going to run into the cove for supper."

The beautiful little cove made a quiet and safe harbor. Here they anchored and made ready to make coffee, roast potatoes and toast marshmallows.

CHAPTER V

Mary and the Boy

MEANWHILE Mary at the cottage was disconsolate enough. To be sure Luella was rather a cheerful companion, and even Miss Ada's Maltese kitten, Cosey, was not to be despised as giving a comforting presence. Yet the weight of her loss lay heavily upon Mary, and she soon escaped from Luella to begin again the weary search. She was on her knees before a large rock when she heard a voice above her say: "What you looking for? A sparrow's nest? I know where there is one."

Mary looked up to see a barefooted boy peering down at her. He had a pleasant face and appeared much as other boys, though she saw at once that he was a fisherman's son, and not one of the summer visitors. "No, I'm not looking for a bird's nest," she said slowly; "I've lost something. Did—did—do you know if any one has found a piece of jewelry?" It flashed across her that she might do well to confide in the little lad.

"Why, no, I don't," he replied, "but I'll help you look for it. I'd just as lief as not. What was it like?"

Mary glanced around her. "I'll tell you," she said, "but I don't want any one else to know. I am so afraid my aunt will be vexed. It is a brooch, a diamond brooch in the shape of a star, that I wore to the party the other night. I lost it coming home, I think."

"It will be pretty hard to find, I'm afraid," said the boy. "Why don't you tack up a notice in the post-office?"

"Oh, because I don't want my aunt to know. I thought if I could only find it, I'd so much rather not tell."

"But, say, you don't stand near so good a chance of finding it if nobody knows."

Mary pondered over this, her desire to find the pin battling with her desire to keep the loss a secret. "I'll look a little longer," she said at last, "and then if I don't find it I will have to tell."

"I guess you do feel pretty bad about it," said the boy. "Diamonds are valuable and if anybody found the pin it might be a temptation to

keep it, especially if it wasn't known who it belonged to. We're pretty honest about here and I guess the Green Island people are, too, so, if it's found, I guess you'll get it again as soon as it's known who lost it."

"I've looked and looked all the way from here to the landing," said Mary disconsolately, "and I don't believe it is here. I do wish I could get over to Green Island somehow."

"Why, it's easy enough to get there," said the boy. "Us boys go over often to pick berries, or sell lobsters to the hotel. I'll row you over in my brother Parker's boat; I know he'll let me have it."

"Oh, how very kind! I would be so relieved. It is most kind of you to offer to take me. Could we go now, before the others get back?"

"Why, I guess so. You come on with me and I'll see. Park's down to the fish-house, and I know he won't be using the boat to-day. You know who I am, don't you? I live in that yellow house just this side Hobbs's store, and I'm Park Dixon's brother Ellis. I'm going lobstering next year; I'm big enough."

Mary looked him over. He was not very big,

she thought, but she did not know just what was the necessary size for one to reach in order to go lobstering, yet it seemed rather to place him in a position to be a safe guide, and she was glad he had told her. "I'm sure," she said following out her thought, "that you're quite big enough to take me."

"Of course I am," he said. "I've sot over quite a lot of people to Green's Island. I sot over a man last week."

Mary hesitated before she asked, "If you please, what is sot over?"

"Why, row 'em over. If you don't take the steamboat there ain't no other way than to be sot over, you see."

"Oh, I see. Thank you. Shall we go to the fish-house now?"

"Why, yes, or you can wait here if you'd rather."

Upon considering, Mary concluded it would be more satisfactory to go, for perhaps Ellis might give her the slip, or, if the big brother objected, she might add her persuasions to Ellis's and so clinch the matter. Yet while she stood waiting for Ellis to make his request for the boat, she

had many compunctions of conscience. She had never before done so bold and desperate a thing. She had scarcely ever appeared on the street without her governess, and indeed it was the strict measures of this same governess which made the child timid about confessing the loss of the pin. As she thought about the trip to Green Island with a strange little boy to whom she had never even spoken before that day, it seemed a monstrous undertaking, and for a moment she quailed before the prospect. Yet what joy if she should return with the precious pin and be able to restore it without a word of censure from any one. This thought decided her to follow when Ellis beckoned to her. Big Parker Dixon smiled and nodded from where he was unloading shining mackerel and big gaping cod, and Mary knew his consent had been given.

"It is a very smelly place," she remarked as she picked her way along the wet fish-house floor.

Ellis laughed. "That's what you summer folks think; we like it."

"Fancy liking it," said Mary, then feeling that perhaps that did not show a proper attitude

toward one so kind as Ellis, she hastened to say, "No doubt it is a lovely smell, you know, and if I were an American perhaps I should prefer it, but I am English, you see."

"That's what makes you talk so funny," said Ellis bluntly.

"Oh, really, do I talk funny? I can't help it, can I, if I am English?"

"Oh, some of the folks that live other places not so far away think we talk funny," Ellis went on to say.

"Do they? Then there is as much difference in liking ways of talking as in the kind of smells you like. Now, I never could bear the smell of onions cooking, and yet nurse says they smell so 'earty and happetizing; she drops her h's, you know."

Ellis stared. He had never heard of dropping h's, but he was too wise to say so. "I'll go get the *Leona*," he said by way of changing the subject. "That's the name of my brother's boat; he named it after his wife. You'd better come on down to Cap'n Dave's wharf; it is easier getting aboard there."

Mary followed down a winding path to the

shore of the cove and waited on the pebbly sands till the boat was shoved up and then she waveringly stepped in, fearfully sat down where Ellis directed, and in a moment his sturdy young arms were pulling at the oars. The deed was done and Mary felt as if she had cast away every shred of home influence. What would Miss Sharp say to see her? Polly wouldn't hesitate to do such a thing, she reflected, and after all she was in America which was a perfectly free country, so Molly and Polly were always telling her, then why not do as she chose? So she settled herself more comfortably and really began to enjoy the expedition.

It was but a short distance to Green Island, and the water of the dividing sound was too smooth to produce any uncomfortable qualms so that Mary felt only a pleasant excitement as she stepped ashore and was piloted by Ellis to the little hall where the fancy dress party had been given. All the way along they looked carefully to see if by chance anything could be discovered of the missing pin, but there was no sign of it. Ellis started inquiries, putting the question to each one he met: "You hain't heerd of any-

body's findin' a breastpin, hev ye? I'll ask at the post-office," he told Mary. "They won't know who you are and if anybody finds it, I'll leave word it's to be returned to me."

"Oh, I'm sure you're very kind," said Mary gratefully. "I can give a reward. Isn't that what persons do?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. Nobody about here wants any reward. I guess any of us is ready to return property when we know where it belongs."

"Oh!" Mary felt properly rebuked. Really Ellis was a very superior sort of person if he did murder the king's English. It was quite evident that his morals were above question. She pattered by his side till they reached the hall. The door was open and the place unoccupied. It no longer seemed enchanted ground. The Japanese lanterns looked out of place in the glare of daylight, and the flowers still remaining, were faded and drooping. Instead of being bright and festive, it appeared bare and desolate to Mary.

She and Ellis walked slowly around, looking in every corner, but their search was not rewarded, and they returned to the boat, stopping at the

post-office on their way. The postmaster and his entire family were greatly interested in Ellis's tale of the lost trinket.

"A diamond breaspin, did you say?" asked Jim Taylor. "Wal now, ain't that a loss? I'll put up a notice right away. Marthy, you ain't heerd of nobody's findin' a diamond breaspin, hev ye?" he questioned a girl who came in to mail a letter. "Some of the P'int folks has lost one. If you hear of its bein' found, tell 'em to fetch it here." He carefully wrote out a notice which he pinned up alongside an advertisement of a boat for sale, a cottage to let, and a moonlight excursion. "That'll fetch it," he said. "If it's been found on this island, you'll get it. You tell 'em over to the P'int we're on the lookout. How is it you're undertakin' to look it up, Ellis? Who's the lady?"

Ellis glanced furtively at Mary, squirming his bare toes on the dusty floor. "Wal, I cal'lated I could find it," he replied. "I undertook it on my own hook, and I guess I'll see it through. I'd like the fun of restorin' it, if I can, Jim."

The postmaster laughed. "You're right cute, Ellis," he said. "Parker gone a-fishin' yet?"

"No," Ellis told him; "he's goin' on Cap'n Abe Larkins' boat. They're loadin' up now. They cal'late to get off in a day or two."

Jim Taylor nodded, and, having despatched the business with Ellis, he turned to wait upon a customer, for this was store and post-office as well.

Mary was surprised to find that every one, young and old was called by the first name; it seemed to her a queer custom. She would have said Mr. Taylor, but Ellis called even the old men Joshua and Abner and all that. She did not criticise, however, for she was very grateful to Ellis for not disclosing her secret. Really he was a boy of very fine feelings, she decided, and she spoke her thought by saying: "You are very good to do all this for me, Ellis."

Ellis looked confused. He had not been brought up to receive praise. "Oh, it ain't nothin'," he said awkwardly. Then changing the subject suddenly, he exclaimed: "There's Luella Barnes!"

"Where?" cried Mary in alarm.

"Comin' out of the ice-cream saloon with Granville. I guess he fetched her over."

"I wonder if she's come after me," said Mary looking scared.

"Did she know you were comin'?"

"No, but I said I would go over to the Whartons'. I meant to go when I told her, so maybe she thinks I am there and thought there was no need for her to stay in. She goes somewhere every afternoon anyhow, so I fancy she hasn't come for me, after all, though I'd rather not see her."

However this was not to be avoided, for Luella had caught sight of Mary and was about to bear down upon her when her attention was distracted by a friend who hailed her and in the meantime Mary slipped out of sight. "That was Mary Reid as sure as shootin'," said Luella to Granville.

"I guess not," he replied. "What would she be doing over here?"

"I cal'lated she'd gone to Whartons'," said Luella, pinching her under lip thoughtfully as she looked down the road.

"Maybe she did go and they've fetched her over in their launch."

Luella "cal'lated" that was just the way of it, and gave herself no further uneasiness, so Mary

escaped by plunging down the bank and skirting the shore till she reached the spot where the boat lay.

"I'll row you over to Jones's Island, if you'd like to go. 'Tain't but a little way. There's lots of strawberries there," the boy said.

This was a temptation Mary considered. The afternoon was but half gone; the evenings were long, and the sailing party would not return before sunset. They enjoyed most of all the coming home when sea and sky were a glory of color and light. It would be a delightful way to pass the remainder of the afternoon, and to carry home a lot of berries for supper would be an excuse to Luella for her long absence. "What will we get the berries in?" she asked Ellis, when her thoughts had traveled thus far.

"I'll run up to the store and get some of those little empty fruit boxes; Jim'll give 'em to me. I saw a pile of 'em lying outside. You wait here." So Mary waited. If it should be discovered that she had gone off with Ellis in the *Leona*, she would at least have the berries as an evidence of what they had gone for. Mary was getting more and more crafty.

The end of it all was that they did row over to Jones's Island. A barren looking, uninhabited spot it seemed from a distance. Barren of trees it was, but when one once reached it there were great patches of strawberries, clumps of wild roses and bayberry bushes, pinky-white clover, deliciously sweet, tiny wild white violets and many other lovely things. Then, too, it was the haunt of birds which, undisturbed, had built their nests there year after year.

It did not take long to pick as many berries as they could eat and as many as they wanted to carry away, and then when the sky was shining gold and pink and blue above and the water shining blue and pink and gold beneath, they started home, reaching there just as Luella, standing on the porch, was watching earnestly for the little girl's return. Ellis had parted from his companion at the point where their roads separated. His supper hour was over long ago, though he did not say so, his parting words being: "I'll let you know first thing if I hear anything of the breastpin."

"Thank you so much," said Mary. "I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed the afternoon."

"I thought maybe you'd stayed at the Whartons' for supper," said Luella, as Mary came up. "Land's sake, where did you get all them berries? I know you didn't get 'em about here. There, now, I said I seen you to Green's. That's just what I said. Did you have a good time? Whartons' is real good about their la'nch, ain't they? Now there's Roops hardly ever takes anybody out but their own folks. I call that mean. Come on in and get your supper. Them berries is so fresh I guess they'll keep till tomorrow, and you'll want the others to have some. I cal'late you've eat your fill of 'em anyway."

Glad that Luella's flow of talk did not demand answers, Mary followed her into the house and when the young woman drew up her chair sociably to eat supper with her, Mary did not feel any resentment, so happy was she that no explanations were expected.

CHAPTER VI

Discoveries

BUT the end was not yet for Mary. To be sure her strawberries were much appreciated, and every one was good enough to say she had been missed, and that it was too bad she had decided to stay at home. "Though after all you weren't lonely," said Molly, "and I'm glad you went over to the Whartons'; they are such nice, friendly people."

"I think they are, too," said Polly. "Luella told us they took you to Green Island on their launch."

"I am delighted that you had that pleasure," said Aunt Ada.

"And I am pleased that you were so industrious as to pick all those berries," Uncle Dick put in his word.

Poor Mary felt very uncomfortable. "I am a wretchedly deceitful girl," she told herself. "Why can't I tell them the truth? But, oh, dear, it is harder to now than it was at first."

So she summoned voice to say only, "Yes, I did have a real nice time. Green Island is almost as pretty as the Point, isn't it?"

"We don't think it is near so pretty," said Molly, loyally.

"But it is lovely," admitted Miss Ada. "I wish you could have seen Rocky Point, Mary; that is the wildest spot imaginable. Perhaps after a while you will get over your fear of being seasick and can go with us on another trip there."

"Oh, it is such a fine place to have supper," put in Polly. "We had a dear little fireplace, and it was so still you could imagine you were hundreds of miles away from a house, and there was nothing to disturb us——"

"Except ants and grasshoppers and mosquitoes," interrupted Uncle Dick.

"I'm sure there were very few of them," protested Molly. "Anyhow it was just fine, Mary, and you must be sure to go next time. We had the loveliest sail home through the sunset."

"Through the sunset," said Uncle Dick scornfully. "One would suppose we were in a balloon."

"Well, but it was sunset on the water, too,"

persisted Molly. "The sea was just as colorful as the sky."

"When anybody coins words like that I'm ready for bed," said Uncle Dick. And Mary, feeling that the subject of the afternoon's doings was exhausted, drew a breath of relief.

The three cousins played together most amicably all the next morning. In Mary's breast hope was high, for might not Ellis appear at any time with the pin? She counted much on that notice in the Green Island post-office. She was brighter than she had been for days so that Molly confided to Polly: "She seems more like us."

"I'm beginning to like her real well," admitted Polly. "She isn't so stiff as she was at first."

"I suppose her Englishism is wearing off," returned Molly.

But that afternoon when she returned from the post-office, whither she had gone for her Aunt Ada, she beckoned to Polly who was playing jacks with Mary. They had a set of jackstones which they had collected themselves from the pebbles on the beach, and the place was much more interesting because of them.

"What do you want?" asked Polly following Molly into the house. "Are there any letters for me?"

"No," said Molly, "but just wait a minute and I'll tell you. I must take Aunt Ada her mail first." Her manner was mysterious and Polly wondered what mighty secret she had to disclose.

"Let's go down to the rocks, to the lion's den," proposed Molly when she came back into the room. "We'd better go around by the back way."

Polly looked surprised. "Why? What for?"

"I've something to tell you and I don't want any one to hear. You will scarcely believe it, Polly, and I'm sure I don't know what to do about it."

"Oh, dear, what can it be?" said Polly. "Is it anything about Luella? Is she going to leave?"

"Oh, dear, no. It is about some one much nearer than Luella."

They avoided being seen from the front of the house till they were well away, and then they ran down to the rocks and settled themselves out of sight below one of the great ledges.

"Now tell," said Polly, all curiosity.

"You must promise not to breathe a word."

"I promise on my sacred word and honor."

"Well then; it is about Mary."

"Mary! Oh, Molly!"

"Yes, what do you think? She wasn't at the Whartons' at all yesterday afternoon."

Polly looked as astonished as Molly expected, though she said, after a pause: "Well she never said she was."

"She let us think so. She didn't deny it."

"But did she go to Green Island? Now I think of it, all she said was that she thought it was a pretty place. She knew that because she saw it when she went over there to the party."

"Yes, I know that, but it wasn't at Green Island that she got the strawberries, Polly, and she didn't go anywhere with the Whartons."

"How do you know?"

"I saw Grace at the post-office. I said to her: 'It was real nice of you all to take Mary out in the launch yesterday,' and she looked so surprised when she said: 'Why, we didn't take Mary. We didn't go out at all yesterday, for

Uncle Will had some of his friends up from town and they were using the launch all day.'"

"What *did* you say?"

"I didn't know what to say. 'Did Mary tell you she was with us?' Grace asked, and I had to crawl out by saying: 'No, Luella thought so.' Then Grace said—now what do you think of this, Polly—she said: 'Why, I saw Mary going out with Ellis Dixon in his brother's boat. I watched them rowing off. I am sure it was Mary. I couldn't be mistaken for no one around here has a hat like hers.'"

Polly was silent with amazement and Molly went on: "I had to say, 'Oh, very likely Aunt Ada knows all about it,' and then I came away as fast as I could."

"Why Molly Shelton!" exclaimed Polly finding her voice, "do you suppose she sneaked off that way with a strange little boy when she says her mother is so particular that she doesn't even let her go on the street alone? I can't believe it. I think Grace must have been mistaken."

"No, she wasn't. I know that."

"How do you know?"

"I saw Parker Dixon and he said, 'Did the

little girl get home all right? She was pretty safe with El, but I didn't know as your aunt mightn't hev been oneasy, seeing they was just two children. You tell her she needn't hev no fear of El; he can handle a boat as good as I kin.'" Molly unconsciously imitated Parker's manner of speaking.

"Then it is true; of course it is," decided Polly. "Are you going to tell Aunt Ada?"

"I don't know what to do. I feel as if I ought, and yet I feel sort of sorry for Mary. She is 'way off from all her people and we've been picking at her for being so particular and not doing this and not doing that, so maybe she thought she was doing no more than we would have done if we had been in her place."

"I know, and maybe we would have done the same, but she needn't have been deceitful," returned Polly. "She could have asked if she might go."

"She didn't have a chance, for we had gone sailing, you know."

"Then she ought to have told the first thing, as soon as she saw Aunt Ada. No, she is a sneaky, horrid girl and I am not going to have anything

more to do with her, if she is my cousin. I was beginning to like her, too." Polly spoke regretfully.

"So was I," agreed Molly. "But now the main thing is, shall we tell or shall we not? I hate to be a tattle-tale."

"Then don't let's tell, but don't let's be more than polite to her and she'll see that something is wrong and maybe she will tell of her own accord. I wish she'd go. I don't like sneaky girls; I'd rather they'd be out and out naughty."

"Why do you suppose she didn't tell?" said Molly thoughtfully. "She might have known that Aunt Ada wouldn't punish her or even scold. She would only have said: 'I'd rather you'd always tell me, Mary, before you undertake such trips again.'" Again Molly imitated the person she quoted. "It doesn't seem to me she could be scared of Aunt Ada when she's always so gentle and kind."

"Well, I don't care whether she was scared or not, she wasn't honest, and I think anyhow it was very queer for her to sneak off with a boy she didn't know."

"But I know him; I used to play with him

when I was only four years old," said Molly. "He is a very nice boy. Aunt Ada says that he has been very well raised and that any mother could be proud of him. He is real bright, too: why, he can manage a sail boat as well as a man, and he's always so ready and willing to do anything he can for any of us. He is very different from some of the others who just can't bear the summer people."

"Never mind about him; I suppose he is all right; it is Mary I am bothered over."

"Well, the only thing we can do is to wait and see if she will tell of her own accord; maybe she hasn't had a good chance yet to see Aunt Ada alone; we are giving her the chance now, so we will wait and see what happens."

This Polly agreed was best, but they returned to the house to turn a cold shoulder to Mary, and to ignore her in every way they could without being directly rude. So directly opposite was this course of conduct from that of the morning, when her cousins had been all smiles and sweetness, that Mary's fears again arose and she was so miserable that at bedtime when Molly went in to her English cousin's room to get a bottle of

cold cream with which to anoint her sunburned face, she heard a soft little sob from Mary's bed.

Immediately her sympathies were aroused. Mary was far from home and mother. What if she had done wrong? She was alone among comparative strangers and who knew the exact truth of yesterday's proceedings? She crept softly to Mary's bedside. Her cousin's face was buried in the pillow, and she was shaking with sobs. Molly leaned over her. "Are you sick, Mary?" she whispered. "Do you want me to call Aunt Ada?"

"No," came feebly from Mary.

"Is anything the matter? Please tell me. I'll get into bed with you." And suiting the action to the word she slipped in beside Mary, putting a sympathetic arm around her. "What is it?" she repeated.

Only sobs from Mary.

"Please tell," persisted Molly.

"Oh, I can't, I can't," said Mary, her tears flowing fast.

"I won't tell a soul. I cross my heart I won't."

Mary checked her sobs a little as she gave heed to the earnest promise. It was a relief to have Molly's comforting presence near by there in the dark. But in a moment her tears gushed forth again. "I want my mother, oh, I want my mother," she wailed.

"Are you so homesick? Is that it?" asked Molly with concern. "Never mind, Mary, you'll see your father soon, and—and—I'm sorry," she whispered, "I'm sorry we were horrid to you. Is that why you are homesick, because Polly and I weren't nice to you?"

"Oh, n–no, it isn't that," replied Mary. "I deserved it, Molly, but oh, you won't tell, you won't tell, will you?"

"Tell what?"

"Oh, Molly, I've lost Aunt Ada's diamond pin, and I can't find it. I've looked and looked and Ellis Dixon helped me, too. I thought if it had been found we would know by this time. That is why we went over to Green Island."

"Then you did go with Ellis."

"Yes, he came along while I was looking for the brooch, after you had all gone sailing, and he offered to take me to Green Island in his brother's

boat, and when we got there the postmaster put up a notice in the post-office and we looked all over the hall everywhere, and all along the road and asked every one we met, but it was no use, and now I am afraid to tell Aunt Ada, and diamonds cost so much I could never buy another like it." It was a relief to Mary to thus unburden herself.

"I don't seem to remember exactly about the pin," said Molly. "Aunt Ada is always getting some pretty new thing, but I don't believe she showed me any diamond pin; it must be quite new. I was so excited about my own costume that night, I forget about any ornaments you wore. Perhaps you could buy another one some time. I have some money, five dollars, and I'll give it to you; I'll take it out of my bank when we go home; that would help."

"Oh, Molly, how good you are!" Mary turned over to put her arm around her cousin. "I have a pound, too, and that might be half enough, or nearly half, but I am afraid it would be a long time before we could get the rest."

"Well, I wouldn't be scared of Aunt Ada, Mary," Molly said. "She is a dear, and she'll be

very sorry, but she will know it was not your fault that you lost it."

"Miss Sharp would say it was my carelessness, and she would be so very vexed."

"Then she's a mean old thing, and not a bit like dear Aunt Ada. Do tell her, Mary."

"Oh, I can't, I can't," persisted Mary, terror again seizing her, "I am so afraid she will be vexed."

"Then let me tell."

"Oh, no, please. Wait a little longer. Perhaps the brooch can be found. Oh, I am so miserable; Aunt Ada will think I am so careless and deceitful, and everything bad."

Molly now felt only a deep pity for the poor little sinner, and she began to kiss away the tears on Mary's cheeks. "Please don't be miserable," she begged. "I think maybe you ought to have told at first, but I see how you felt, and I'll not be horrid to you any more, Mary. I'll stand up for you straight along, and when you want Aunt Ada to know I will go with you to tell her."

Mary really began to feel comforted. "I think you are a perfect duck, Molly," she said. "Fancy

after all I have been doing, for you to be so kind. But please don't tell Polly; I know she doesn't like me."

"She did like you," said Molly truthfully, "until—until we heard that you had not been where Aunt Ada thought you were."

"And she thinks I am deceitful; so I have been, and I hate myself for it."

"But Polly doesn't know why you did it."

"Then don't tell her; I'd rather anything than that."

"Don't you want Polly to like you?"

"Yes, but I don't want her to know I lost the brooch."

It was useless to try to rid poor Mary's mind of the one idea, and at last Molly gave up trying, but she did not leave her forlorn little cousin, and Polly, in the next room while she wondered what could be keeping Molly, fell asleep in the midst of her wondering.

CHAPTER VII

In Elton Woods

POLLY was all curiosity the next morning. "Why in the world didn't you sleep with me?" she asked, sitting up in bed as Molly came in from the next room.

"Because Mary needed me. She was in awful trouble," replied Molly soberly.

"What was it?" asked Polly eagerly.

"I can't tell you."

"I think that's real mean," returned Polly indignantly. "You're just a turncoat, Molly Shelton; first you're friends with me, and then you're thick as can be with Mary."

"I'm not a turncoat," retorted Molly, angry at being called names. "She's as much my cousin as you are, and I reckon if you were way off from your mother and had a dreadful thing happen that you couldn't talk to her about, you'd want some one to be a little sorry for you."

"I think a dreadful thing is happening to me when you talk that way to me," said Polly, melting into tears. "I just wish I had never come here, I do so, and I reckon I want my mother as much as Mary does hers. I am going to tell Uncle Dick how you act, so I am."

"Oh, please don't tell him!" exclaimed Molly, alarmed. "We don't want any one to know."

This but whetted Polly's curiosity. "I think you might tell me," she pouted.

"I can't. I promised I wouldn't. You shall know as soon as Mary says I may tell."

"Oh, I don't care then. Keep your old secrets if you want to," and Polly flounced out of bed and began vigorously to prepare for her bath. For the rest of the time before breakfast she did not speak a word to Molly who felt that she was indeed between two fires. She had promised not to tell Aunt Ada and if Polly were to tell Uncle Dick that morning that something was wrong, it might add to Mary's troubles. She pondered the matter well while she was dressing, and by the time she had tied on her hair ribbon she had concluded to forestall Polly by telling her Uncle Dick something of what was the matter. She

decided that she could do so without betraying Mary's confidence. So she stepped down-stairs ahead of Polly and joined her Uncle Dick who was energetically walking up and down the porch.

"Hello, Mollykins!" he cried. "I'm getting up an appetite for breakfast. Come and join me."

"As if you ever had to do anything to get up an appetite," retorted Molly, slipping her hand under his arm. "Oh, you take such long steps I have to take two to keep up with you."

"So much the better, then you work twice as hard and can have twice as much. I peeped into the kitchen, but Luella looked as fierce as a sitting hen, and I didn't dare to stay; however, I know we are to have hot rolls for breakfast; I saw them."

"The pocketbook kind, with the lovely brown crust all around? Good! I certainly want a double appetite for those. Uncle Dick, you oughtn't to tell other people's secrets, ought you?"

"No–o, not usually. Whose secret is burning in your breast?"

"Why—promise not to tell a soul."

"Is it a murder?"

"No, of course not."

"Is it grand larceny?"

"I don't know what that is."

"It is stealing something worth while, not like a loaf of bread nor a pin, nor anything of that kind. You know the copy-book says: 'It is a sin to steal a pin.'"

"Is it a sin to lose a pin?"

"Why, no, not unless it is a breastpin or a scarf-pin and you wilfully throw it to the fishes."

Molly drew a sigh of relief. "Suppose you lose something that belongs to some one else; is that a sin?"

"Why no, it is a misfortune, not a crime. You don't do it on purpose, you see, and in fact I think the loser generally feels worse than the one the thing belongs to. What have you lost? Not my favorite scarf-pin, I hope. Have you been using it to pin rags around your doll?"

"Oh, Uncle Dick, of course I haven't. I was only asking, just because I wanted to know."

"As a seeker after ethical truths. It does you credit, Miss Shelton. You will probably join a

college settlement when you are older, or at least write a paper on moral responsibilities."

"Oh, Uncle Dick, you do use such silly long words."

"I forget, when you tackle these abstruse subjects. I will come down from my lofty perch, Molly. What more can your wise uncle tell you?"

"If a person loses something very costly, something that has been lent to her, ought she to pay it back?"

"It is generally supposed to be the proper thing to replace it, but half the world doesn't do it; sometimes because they can't and sometimes because they don't want to. Then, sometimes the one to whom the thing belonged, insists upon not having it replaced, and would feel very uncomfortable if it were, though, from the standpoint of strict honesty, one should always make good any borrowed article whether lost, strayed or stolen."

"Would you insist upon its not being made good?"

"I shouldn't wonder if I were that kind of gander."

"Would Aunt Ada?"

"I think she's probably that kind of goose."

"Oh, I am so glad she is a goose."

"Glad who is a goose?" said Aunt Ada from the doorway.

"We were talking about you," said her brother laughing. "Molly was calling you a goose."

"Oh, Uncle Dick, you began it."

"Did I? Well, never mind. I smell those rolls, Molly, and I feel that I can demolish at least six. Come on, let's get at them."

Although she had not really carried the subject as far as she wanted, Molly felt that matters were not so bad for Mary as they had at first appeared, therefore, she took the first opportunity to reassure her on that point. Polly walked off to the Whartons' immediately after breakfast, announcing with quite an air of wishing it generally known that she would probably spend the day with Grace in the woods, and that Luella had given her a lunch to take.

Miss Ada smiled when this announcement was made. She realized that there had been some childish squabble and she never paid much attention to such. Mary saw at once that Polly

was jealous of Molly's attentions to her small self, and Molly felt so grieved at Polly's desertion that she could hardly keep back the tears. It was very hard to do right in this world, she thought. If she were loyal to Mary she must lose Polly's companionship, and she did love to be with Polly more than any one she had ever known. If she clung to Polly, she must give up Mary at a time when Mary most needed her.

She looked after Polly skipping over the hummocks to Grace Wharton's and wished she were going, too. It was so lovely in the woods. As if reading her thought, her Aunt Ada came up and put a hand on her shoulder. "Suppose we all take our luncheon in the woods to-day," she said. "It is too lovely to stay indoors a minute. Should you kitties like to go? Dick is to be off sailing with Will Wharton and we three could have a nice quiet time. I'll take some books; you can have your dolls, and we'll go to Willow Cove."

"That's where Polly is going," said Molly quickly.

Aunt Ada smiled. "Suppose we go to Elton woods instead, then."

"I like it better anyhow," said Molly truthfully. "I'd like nothing better than to spend the day there, you dearest auntie."

"Then there we will go. Luella wants the day off, anyhow. She says she must go to town to have a tooth out, for 'the tooth aches something awful.' That is the third since we came. If she keeps on at this rate, she will not have a tooth left in her head by fall. It will be much easier to have a nice little lunch in the woods than to cook a dinner at home, don't you think? Suppose you and Mary run over to Mrs. Fowler's and see if she can let us have a boiled lobster; she generally is ready to put them on about this time of day, and you might stop at Skelton's on your way back and get some of those good little ginger-snaps."

"Aunt Ada is such a dear," said Molly, as the two started off. "I don't believe she would ever, ever want you to get another pin, Mary, and if I were you I would tell her all about it to-day; it will be such a good chance."

"I'll see about it," said Mary evasively.

There was no lovelier spot on the Point than Elton woods. Here the great trees grew to the

very edge of the cliffs, and the way to them was through paths bordered by ferns, wild roses, and woodland flowers. In some places the trees wore long gray beards of swaying moss and stood so close together that only scant rays of daylight crept under them; in others they shot up high and straight above their carpet of pine-needles, which made a soft dry bed for those who lingered beneath them to gaze at the white-capped waves chasing each other in shore, or who, lying down, watched the fleecy clouds drifting across the sky. Near by was a pebbly beach where one could gather driftwood for a fire, or could pick up smooth water-washed stones to build walks and walls for tiny imaginary people. There was no end of the material the place afforded for amusement, and when they reached there, Molly eagerly fell to devising plays.

Yet, alas! She missed Polly's fertile brain and imaginative suggestions. Polly was always able to discover fairy dells and gnome-frequented caves. It was she who invented the plays which were the most delightful. Mary was rather tiresome when it came to anything more than sober facts. She would play very nicely with the dolls,

but, when it came to make-believe creatures, she was sadly wanting, and the best response Molly could expect to get when she built a fairy dwelling was: "Oh, I say, that is a proper little house, isn't it?" or "What a duck of a tree that is you are planting; it is quite tiny, isn't it?"

"We always take some of these little bits of trees home with us," Molly told her, "and they live ever so long."

"I wonder could I take one to England," said Mary.

"Why, yes, I should think you could easily. We will get some the very last thing, and I am sure they'll live quite a while."

"It would be jolly nice to have one, wouldn't it?" said Mary as she watched Molly patting the ground smooth around the one she had just planted in the fairy garden. "I'd like to take some pebbles and some starfish, too. Reggie would be so pleased with them; he would be quite vexed if I brought him none after telling him about them."

"How often you say vexed, don't you?" remarked Molly. "We hardly ever say vexed."

"What do you say?"

"Oh, I don't know; we say mad and angry and provoked."

"But then I really mean vexed," returned Mary after a moment's thought. "I don't mean anything else," and Molly had nothing more to say.

It was after they had finished the lobster, the egg sandwiches, the buttered rolls and gingersnaps and were delicately eating some wild strawberries the children had gathered, that Molly made a sudden resolution to plunge Mary into a confession.

"If you lent some one a diamond pin and she were to lose it would you be very—very vexed, Aunt Ada?" she asked, after a hasty glance at Mary.

"If I possessed a diamond pin I might be, but as I haven't such a thing I couldn't be vexed," her aunt said.

Mary jumped to her feet, startled out of her usual reserve.

"But, Aunt Ada, you did have one!"

"When, please? You must have dreamed it, Mary, dear."

"But you did have. Oh, do you mean you know it is lost?"

It was Miss Ada's turn to look surprised. "What do you mean, child?" she said knitting her brows. "I never had a diamond pin to my knowledge. I always liked diamond rings, and I have two or three of those, but a pin I never possessed. What are you talking about?"

Mary laced and unlaced her fingers nervously. "I mean the one you lent me to wear the night we dressed up for the party at Green Island. Was it some other person's, then? Oh, Aunt Ada, had some one lent it to you, for if they did"—she faltered, "I lost it coming home." She sank down at Miss Ada's feet on the mossy ground and buried her face in her aunt's lap.

Miss Ada put a kind hand on her head. "And all this time you have been distressing yourself about it, you poor little kitten? I ought to have told you, but you were so pleased in thinking it was real I thought I would let it go, and I have not thought of it since. Why, dear, it was of no value at all, a mere trumpery little rhinestone that cost only a couple of dollars."

Mary lifted her tearful eyes. "Oh, I am so

relieved," she said. "I've searched and searched for it ever since."

"Yes, Aunt Ada, and she has been nearly sick over it," put in Molly. "She cried herself to sleep last night, and the reason she wouldn't go sailing with us the other day was because she wanted to hunt for the pin."

"You poor little darling, how can I make up to you for all this trouble?" said Miss Ada compassionately. "I am so sorry; it is all my fault for not telling you in the first place."

On the strength of this there seemed no better time to confess her doings of the afternoon when she had gone to Green Island in the *Leona*, and so Mary faltered out her tale, Molly once in a while coming in with excuses and comments so that in the end Miss Ada was not "vexed" at all but only said, "If it had been any one but Ellis, I might feel inclined to warn you against going out in a row-boat, but he is a good, careful little lad, and if you will call it quits, Mary, I will, for I am conscience-stricken my own self; but next time, dearie, ask me when you want to go on the water."

"Oh, I will, I will," said Mary fervently. "It

was because I felt so dreadful at losing the brooch that I didn't tell this time."

"It is a perfect shame," said her Aunt Ada, cuddling her close. "I hope now you will never find the old pin. I never want to see it again, for it would remind me of how my dear little niece suffered."

"But I was bad. I deceived you." Mary's head went down again in her aunt's lap. "I was afraid to tell you," she murmured.

"Afraid of what, dear child? Not of your Aunt Ada?"

"I don't know, oh, I don't know why I was so scared. Miss Sharp is always so terribly severe when we are careless or try to get out of any thing we have done wrong."

"But I'm not Miss Sharp, honey. Just forget all about this, if you love me. Of course you weren't quite frank, but you were scared and it is as much my fault as yours; mine and Miss Sharp's," she added half to herself.

Yet they were destined to see the pin again, for that very afternoon, as they were coming home, whom should they meet but Polly and Grace. "Guess what we've found!" cried Grace.

"See, Miss Ada, we were looking for birds' nests between your cottage and ours, and we found this caught in the grass just near where a sparrow had built. Polly says she thinks it is yours, that it looks like one you lent to Mary to wear to the party." And she held out the little shining star in the palm of her hand.

Miss Ada took it and gave a whimsical look at Mary. "Yes, I believe it is mine," she said. She tossed it back and forth from one hand to the other as she stood thinking.

"Ellis Dixon came along just after we found it, and he seemed awfully pleased," Grace went on.

Miss Ada laughed softly. "Thank you very much, Grace, dear," she said. "It was good of you to bring it right to me." Then changing the subject she asked, "How is your grandmother to-day?"

"Not so very well," Grace replied. Then with sudden remembrance, "I must go right back, for she worries if I am not in time for supper." And she sped away.

Miss Ada stood still smiling and looking from one of her nieces to the other. She continued to

toss the little star from one hand to the other. "I know what I am going to do with it," she said looking at Mary. "I'm going to give it to Luella for a wedding present."

CHAPTER VIII

Elfis and the Baby

THAT evening Polly was told the whole story and was properly contrite. She felt a little aggrieved that she had not been one of the party to go to Elton woods, but she realized that it was her own fault, and offered at once to "make up" with Molly and Mary. So all was serene again, and the three children sat side by side all evening before the open fire, listening to a fascinating story Uncle Dick read aloud to them, and at last the three fell asleep all in a heap, Molly's head in Polly's lap, and the other two resting against Miss Ada's knees. When they all stumbled upstairs to bed, they were not too sleepy, however, to kiss one another good-night, and indeed were so bent upon showing no partiality that they all tumbled into the same bed, which happened to be Mary's, where they went to sleep, hugging each other tight.

The brightness of the restored pin seemed to be reflected upon them all after this. Uncle Dick was so tremendously funny at breakfast that Polly fell from her chair with laughter, and Luella giggled so that she held a plate of griddle cakes at such an angle that the whole pile slid off on the floor; then every one laughed more than ever and Molly said that her jaws fairly ached and that she would have to spend the day with Cap'n Dave's old white horse, for he had such a solemn face it made you want to sigh all the time. Of course this started the children off again and they left the table in high spirits.

Yet before the day was over they had occasion to look serious without the society of old Bill horse, for about ten o'clock Ellis appeared, trouble puckering his pleasant face into worried lines. He had forgotten all about the finding of the pin in a more personal interest, for the cares of life had been suddenly thrust upon him. His brother Parker the day before had sailed away to the Grand Banks for sword-fishing. He had left his young wife and little baby in Ellis's charge. Now Leona had fallen ill, "and," said Ellis, "it's up to me to take care of the baby."

"Is there no one else?" asked Miss Ada, as Ellis told his doleful tale.

"Ora Hart is taking care of Leona," Ellis answered; "but she has as much as she can do to look after her own children. She's Leona's cousin and she's awful good to come in at all. You see most everybody's got folks of their own to see to, and they can't spare much time, although they're all willin' enough to do what they can. I ain't much used to babies myself. I got Nellie Brown to look after her while I come up here. I knew you'd wonder why I didn't bring them clams I promised, and so I come to tell you why. I hope it won't put you out, Miss Ada."

"We can have something else just as well," she told him. "We are rather used to not getting just what we plan for," she went on, smiling, for be it known one could never tell, at the Point, just how an order might turn out. If one expected lamb chops like as not "Hen Roberts hadn't fetched over no lamb," or if mackerel had been ordered like as not the fish delivered would be cod, and the excuse would be that some one came along and carried off the

entire supply of mackerel before the last orders were filled; therefore it was no new experience for Miss Ada to have to alter her bill of fare.

"I'm awful sorry about havin' to stay home just now," said Ellis disconsolately, "for this is when I expected to get in some time with the boat. I promised two or three parties to take 'em out, and now I'll have to get some one else to take my place, but I'll have to let 'em go shares. Park's let me have the *Leona* whilst he's away, but, if I could run her myself, I could make twice as much."

The three little girls listened attentively, and presently Polly twitched her Aunt Ada's sleeve. "Couldn't we take care of the baby?" she whispered.

Miss Ada looked down at her with a smile, but shook her head.

"Oh, why not?" said Polly in a louder whisper. "I'd love to."

"So would I," came from Molly on the other side.

Miss Ada beholding the eager faces said: "Wait a moment, Ellis. I want to talk over something with these girls of mine." She led

the way indoors, leaving Ellis on the porch. "Now, lassies," she said when they were all in the living-room, "what is it you want to do?"

"We want to take care of Ellis's baby," chanted the two, and Mary coming in as a third repeated the words.

"But do you realize what it would mean? You would have to give up much of your playtime, and could not go off sailing or rowing or picnicking."

"We could go picnicking," insisted Polly, "because we could take the baby with us."

"Very well, we will leave out the picnic. I might get Luella to stay afternoons sometimes, but you know she goes home to help her mother, for Mrs. Barnes has more laundry work than she can do, and Luella has to help her when she can; those were the only terms upon which she would consent to come to me; so you see we can't count on Luella."

"It may not be for very long," said Polly, hopefully. "Leona may soon get well."

"If it is typhoid, as they suspect, she is likely to be ill a long time."

"Well, I don't care; I'll give up my afternoons," decided Polly.

"And I'll give up my mornings," said Molly, not to be outdone. "And then the baby does sleep some, so we can play while she is asleep. Oh, Polly, we could have lovely times playing with something alive like that."

"Wouldn't it be jolly to have a real live baby for a doll," put in Mary.

"I see you are not to be put off," said Miss Ada, laughing, "so I will allow you to undertake the charge for a week, and at the end of that time if I think it is too much for you, I shall have to insist that you give it up."

"Oh, we'll never think it is too much," declared Polly with conviction, and the others echoed her.

So they all trooped out to Ellis. "We have the loveliest plan," Molly began eagerly.

"You can have all your time," put in Polly.

"I am so very pleased to be able to do something for you when you were so kind to me," said Mary earnestly.

Ellis looked bewildered.

"The girls propose to take care of your

brother's little baby for a week, Ellis," Miss Ada explained.

"Oh, I can't let 'em do that," said Ellis bashfully.

"Oh, but we are just wild to," Polly assured him.

"Yes, we truly are," Molly insisted. "We adore babies. When can you bring her over, Ellis? Shall we keep her day and night, Aunt Ada, and may she sleep with me?"

"Oh, Ora's sister says she can take her at night," Ellis hastened to say. "She can't leave home very well, and she is too busy during the day to look out for her, for she has a lot of children, but none of them are little small babies; the youngest is three, and she says she doesn't mind having the baby at night."

"Then we'll arrange for the day only," said Miss Ada with decision; "that is when she would require your time, Ellis, and we are glad to help you out so you can take out the boat when you have the opportunity."

"I'm sure I'm much obliged," said Ellis awkwardly. Like most of the "Pointers" he was unused to showing his gratitude. To his mind

any display of appreciation was poor-spirited. He was too proud to let any one see that he felt under obligations and to say even as much as he did was an effort. Nevertheless, he trotted off feeling a great weight removed, and in half an hour was back again with the little four-months-old baby.

For that day, at least, the small Miss Myrtle Dixon was overwhelmed with attentions. Polly sat by when she slept, ready to pounce upon her and take her up at the slightest movement. Molly was on hand to urge a bottle of milk upon her if she so much as whimpered. Mary dangled be-ribboned trinkets before her the minute she opened her eyes, and they were all in danger of hurting her with overkindness.

The second day she was less of a novelty, though sufficiently entertaining for each of her three nurses to clamor for her.

"She is too dear for anything," said Molly ecstatically. "See her laugh, Mary, and flutter her little hands. She is to be my baby this morning. Let's go around the side of the house, where it is shady, and play. You can have the place under the porch for your house, Polly, and

Mary can have the wood-shed. I'll take the cellar."

"Oh, but that will be too cold and damp for the baby," said Mary. "You take the wood-shed and I'll take the cellar," she added generously.

Molly agreed and presently baby was established in a crib made of the clothes-basket where she lay contentedly sucking her thumb. Mary, hugely enjoying herself, kept house in the cellar. She sat at the door in a rocking-chair which she rocked back and forth with a blissful expression on her face. If there was any American comfort which Mary did appreciate it was a rocking-chair. She had never seen one till she came to the United States, neither had she ever before made the acquaintance of chewing-gum. This was a luxury seldom allowed the little girls. "It is a disgusting habit," Miss Ada declared, "and I don't want you children to acquire it. Your mother, Mary, would be shocked if she saw you use it." But once in a while Uncle Dick slyly furnished each with a package and Miss Ada allowed them to have it, though protesting all the time to her brother. This special morning Uncle Dick had hidden a package under each of

their breakfast plates, and it is needless to say that three pairs of jaws were working vigorously as they played house.

"I'm going to ask Aunt Ada if we may go barefoot," announced Molly; "it is plenty warm enough to-day."

Mary jumped up, tipping over her rocking-chair as she did so. "Oh, does she allow you to do that?" she cried. "I've always secretly longed to, but Miss Sharp is perfectly horrified when we ask her."

The other two looked at each other with a little smile, for it was not such a great while before this that Mary herself had been horrified at the suggestion.

"Aunt Ada doesn't care, if it is warm enough," Molly informed her. "I always go barefoot up here, if I feel like it and it isn't too cold. I'll go ask her now. Watch the baby for me, girls."

They promised to be faithful nurses while Molly went on her errand. She was gone some time and when she returned she was carefully bearing a plate of fresh doughnuts. "Which would you rather have, Polly," she cried, "dough-

nuts or chewing-gum? you can't have both, Aunt Ada says."

"Doughnuts," decided Polly without hesitation taking the chewing-gum from her mouth and slapping it securely against a stone in the foundation of the porch. "Don't they look good? So brown and sugary. I do think Luella makes the best doughnuts," and she helped herself to a specially fat, appetizing one.

"Which do you choose, Mary?" asked Molly.

Mary continued her rocking and chewing. "I'll keep the gum, thank you."

Molly laughed. "That is what Aunt Ada said you would do. And girls, we may take off our shoes and stockings. How's the baby, Polly?"

"Sound asleep."

"Good! Then I reckon we can leave her for a while. I do want to get my bare toes on the grass, don't you? Come on, Polly, and let's hunt for snakes."

"Snakes!" Mary jumped to her feet in horror. "Are there snakes here? Fancy!" She gathered her skirts about her and looked ready to fly.

"Why, yes. Do you mind them?" returned

Molly calmly. "Polly and I love the little green grass snakes; they are perfectly harmless and are so pretty."

"Pretty? I could never imagine anything pretty about a snake," replied Mary, recoiling. "My word! Molly, just fancy your talking so of a horrid snake."

Molly laughed at her horror. "They aren't poisonous, Mary."

"But the very idea of them is so loathsome."

"It isn't unless you make it so," put in Polly. "I like all kinds of little creatures so long as they don't bite or sting, and some of those, like bees, for example, I like, though I don't want them to get too near me. Of course when it comes to rattlesnakes or copperheads, or such, I am afraid of them, but these little grass snakes are different."

But Mary could not be persuaded to give up her prejudices and would none of the snakes, so they decided to gather buttercups, and wandered off among the soft grasses on the hilltop. But it was only when they saw Luella wildly waving the dish-cloth to attract their attention that they remembered the baby. Then they started

toward the cottage post-haste, arriving there to find Miss Ada walking the floor with the baby and trying to still its cries.

"What is the matter with her?" cried Molly rushing in. "We thought she was sound asleep."

"Babies don't sleep forever," remarked Luella sarcastically. "Here, Miss Ada, I'm used to 'em. Let me see if there's a pin stickin' her anywhere; there's no knowin' what foolin' with her clothes these children have been doin'."

The children dared not protest against this charge while Miss Ada said: "Oh, I have looked and she seems all right," but she relinquished the baby into Luella's capable hands.

That young woman turned the screaming infant over, felt for an offending pin, turned her back again, and finally laid her across her knees and began to pat her on the back. "I guess she's got colic," she decided. "Molly, you just step up to Mis' Chris Fisher's and see if she's got a handful of catnip. She mostly does keep it, seein' she always has got a baby on hand. There, there, there," she tried to soothe the child on her knees. "Miss Ada, you'll either have to

take her or see to them pies in the oven ; I can't do both."

"Oh, I'll see to the pies," responded Miss Ada escaping to the kitchen.

Molly was already on her way to Mrs. Chris Fisher's. Polly vainly tried to attract the baby's attention by every means within her power. Mary stood by suggesting alternately mustard poultices and ginger tea, which suggestions Luella contemptuously put aside.

"I don't see what's the matter with her unless it is colic," she remarked. "She may be subject to it ; I ain't heard say. I'll ask Ora next time I go out. When was she fed last ?"

"Why, I don't know." The two little girls looked at each other. "Did you give her the bottle, Mary ?" asked Polly.

"No," was the reply.

"Maybe Molly did. I reckon it was Molly ; she was playing she was mother this morning, you know." Luella said nothing but continued the rocking movement of her knees till Molly came in, breathless, with the bunch of dried catnip.

"I suppose she's been fed regular," said Luella

addressing Molly, "and you've took care to give her the milk warm."

"Oh, dear!" Molly stood still. "I forgot she had to be fed oftener than we are, and oh, Luella, I am afraid the last milk she took wasn't real warm."

"Then no wonder she's yellin' like mad," said Luella disgustedly. "You're a nice set to take care of a young un. Here, some of you hold her whilst I get her milk and give it to her right. If she ain't got colic from cold milk she's starvin'."

Molly meekly took charge of the screaming child who did not cease its crying till Luella, returning with the bottle of milk, thrust the rubber nipple into its mouth; then suddenly all was quiet. "Just what I thought; half starved," said Luella. "It looks as if I'd got to see to the youngster, if she stays here. Miss Ada's not much better than the rest of you. What does she know about babies? I guess Ellis can beat the best of you, after all, when it comes to 'tendin' babies."

The little girls felt properly abashed. Only the second day of the baby's stay and she had

gone hungry for an hour, while the day before she had been overfed. It did not look as if their benevolent plan worked very well, and indeed, by the end of the week, Miss Ada decided that Miss Myrtle must return to her own. This was made easier by her grandmother's arrival upon the scene, and there were helpers enough to relieve Ellis for at least half the day. However the interest in Parker Dixon's family did not end at once.

CHAPTER IX

New Burdens for Ellis

THE three cousins were having a tea on the rocks with their friend Grace Wharton. Luella had baked them some tiny biscuits and some wee ginger-snaps; they had made the fudge themselves, and as for the tea, the amount Miss Ada allowed them would not affect the nerves of any one of the four. There was plenty of hot water in the little brass tea-kettle, and an unlimited supply of milk and sugar. A big flat rock served as a table, and smaller ones gave them excellent seats.

They had just finished eating the last of the cakes and were nibbling the fudge when Polly, perched highest on the rocks, exclaimed: "There's Granville talking to Luella! I wonder what he is doing up here this time of day. They look real excited. There, Luella is going into the house. Now Aunt Ada has come out with her and they are all talking together. I

believe I'll go up and see what it is all about. Don't eat up all the fudge."

"Hurry back then," Molly called after her. "Let's hide it, girls, and pretend when she comes back that we've eaten it all up."

"I'll hide it," said Grace. She ran down a little way below them and poked the remaining pieces of fudge into a crevice in the rock, and then returned to await Polly's return, who in a few minutes came running back. "Oh," she said, "I have something to tell you. Our poor little baby hasn't any father. He has been drowned."

"Oh, how dreadful!" Three pairs of startled eyes showed how this news affected the little tea-drinkers.

"Do tell us about it," said Molly setting down the cup from which she was draining the last sugary drop.

"I didn't hear all about it," Polly told them, "but I know he tried to save one of his shipmates and couldn't, and they were both drowned. Luella is going down to stay with Ora's children this afternoon. They haven't told Leona yet, and poor Ellis is perfectly distracted, Granville

says. Isn't it sad, when Leona has been so ill and now this dreadful thing has happened?"

"I feel so very sorry for Ellis," remarked Mary.

"So do I," said Polly, "for the baby isn't big enough to know, and maybe Leona can get another husband, but Ellis can't get another brother."

They all agreed that this was a plain fact and sat quite solemnly looking off at the blue sea which had so cruelly swallowed up Parker.

At last Polly gave a long sigh, and she broke the silence by exclaiming, "There, you mean piggies, you ate up all the fudge!"

"You were gone so long," said Molly giving Grace a nudge.

"I don't care; you ought to have saved an extra piece for my bringing you such exciting news."

"But it was such sad news," said Grace turning away her head so Polly could not see her smile.

"If it is sad you needn't laugh about it," said Polly severely. "I believe you hid it!" she exclaimed suddenly.

"If you think so, look for it," said Molly. And Polly immediately set to work to search each one of the party, but could not find a crumb of fudge.

Then she seized Molly, playfully shaking her. "Tell me truly, did you eat it all?"

Amid her struggles to free herself, Molly confessed that they had not. "But, I can't find it," Polly persisted. "Do you know where it is, Molly?"

"No."

"Oh, Molly!" This from Grace.

"I don't exactly know. You hid it," said Molly.

"Then Grace Wharton, tell me." Polly loosed her hold upon Molly, and turned to Grace.

"No, the first that finds it can divide it and can have an extra piece."

In vain the three searched up and down the cliff. "Grace said she hid it between two rocks," announced Molly at last.

"Then she's just got to find it," said Polly. "Grace! Grace!" she called. And Grace responded by appearing on the rocks above them.

"You'll have to show us where you hid it."

On Grace's face was an expression of concern as she came swiftly clambering down to them. "Why, girls," she cried as she reached the spot where they stood, "I'm awfully afraid that —— Oh, dear, why didn't I remember about the tide; I'm afraid they're spoiled." She ran to a rock a little lower down.

"Look out or you'll get splashed," warned Molly. "There's a big wave coming in."

Grace sprang back to avoid the swash of water which poured over the rock at her feet; then she exclaimed ruefully: "If I wasn't sure before, I am now! The fudge is just under that rock, between those two small ones."

"Then it's simply all salty, if it isn't gone entirely," declared Molly. True enough when they examined the spot, during a lull in the in-pour of waves, they discovered only a couple of water-soaked bits of fudge, fast melting away.

"Our joke didn't turn out very well," said Molly turning to Polly.

"Oh, never mind," returned Polly cheerfully, "it would all be eaten up and forgotten anyhow if I had not gone up to the house, so what's the difference?"

"I'll make some very soon," Grace assured her. "I'll do it to-night."

"Oh, no, don't mind," said Polly. "We've had enough for to-day. See, there is Aunt Ada coming down to us. She will tell us more about the Dixons."

Miss Ada came with a scheme to unfold. "I'm going over to Green Island," she told them, "and if I am not back in time for supper you children hunt around and get something for yourselves. Luella has gone to stay with Ora's family so Ora can be with Leona. She will need all the comfort she can get. We must try to help the poor girl, for her illness and all this will take everything they may have saved. Ellis is pitifully sad, but he says he means to support the family. Poor little chap, as if he could! I am going to try to arrange a bazaar or cake sale or something to help them; you children may help if you like."

"Oh, may we? How lovely!" cried Molly.

"I've helped at fairs," said Grace.

"And once I helped my aunt at a tea she gave the village children," said Mary.

"I'll do everything I can, though I never saw

a fair or a bazaar," said Polly. "Tell us more about it, Aunt Ada."

"Tell her all you know, girls," said Aunt Ada. "I must go now. You will not be afraid to stay alone till I get back, will you?"

Her nieces assured her that they would not, and she left them in quite a state of excitement, for, sad as the occasion was, they could not help anticipating the pleasure of the bazaar. "We will have such a lovely time getting ready for the sale," said Molly. "We have had them here before, and they are lots of fun. I know what I am going to do. I'm going to the wood-pile and strip off a whole lot of birch bark to make things of."

"What kind of things?" asked Mary.

"Oh, all sorts of things; napkin rings and picture frames and boxes."

"Oh!" Mary was interested. She had never seen such things except those that the Indian peddlers brought around to the cottages, and never did one appear over the brow of the hill, bowed under the burden of his baskets, that she did not run for her purse, and by now had quite an array of gifts for her English friends. To add to these

a supply of birch-bark souvenirs which she could make herself was a prospect truly delightful. "It is very convenient that a quarter is about the same as a shilling," she remarked, "but I can never remember that a penny is two cents; it seems as if an American penny should be the same as an English one."

"I should think you would be glad it isn't," said Polly, "for when you are counting at the rate of our pennies you have twice as many as you would have English ones."

"Well, I don't know," said Mary thoughtfully: "I had a whole pound when I reached here, and Uncle Dick had it changed into American money. I thought I had such a number of pennies and I found they were only cents, but then one can buy a great many things here for a cent that one would have to pay a penny for at home, especially sweets."

That evening she sat fingering her little hoard while Molly was busy preparing her birch bark. "I think I can do very nicely," announced Mary. "I shall have a dollar to spend at the bazaar. Oh, is that the way you do the napkin rings, Molly? Could I do some, do you think?"

"Of course you could," said Molly, encouragingly.

"I know what I am going to do," said Polly, jumping up; "I'm going to get some tiny pine trees to put into little birch-bark boxes; they will look so pretty. Come on, Molly, it isn't dark yet."

"Oh, but we mustn't get them now," replied Molly. "We must wait till the very last thing, so they will look as fresh as possible."

Polly stopped short. In her impetuous way she had forgotten this important point. "Oh, I never thought of that," she said. "Well, anyhow, we can make the boxes."

"I don't believe we can do those either," returned Molly, further dampening Polly's ardor. "We ought to have some small wooden boxes to tack or glue the bark on. We can try some little baskets with handles, and we can fill those with fudge or some kind of home-made candy."

"Oh, very well, we'll begin on those, then." And Polly sat down contentedly with the others to try her ingenuity. They became so absorbed in their work that they forgot all about supper, the more so that their afternoon tea had taken

the edge from their appetites, and it was not till the maid from the Whartons came over for Grace, saying that her grandmother was wondering how much longer they must save her supper for her that they realized how late it was. Then Grace having scurried home, the three cousins searched about to see what was in the larder for themselves. They found plenty of bread and butter, ginger-snaps and stewed gooseberries, but not much else, so they sat down contentedly to this fare while the sunset turned from rose to purple and then to gray. It was late enough in the season for the evenings to become chilly after sundown, and Polly proposed that they should have an open fire. "We can sit around and tell stories," she said, "and we can go on with our work at the same time, so the time will pass very quickly till Aunt Ada comes back."

"I'll love that," declared Molly. "I think telling stories is the very nicest way of passing away the time."

"So do I," said Mary, "when I don't have to tell the stories. I never know anything interesting."

"Oh, but you do," protested Polly. "We like

to hear about England, of how you have to take off your shoes and put on slippers in the schoolroom, of how you can't walk out without your governess or some one older and all about not having sweet potatoes nor corn, and of how tomatoes are grown under glass and all those ways that are so different from ours."

"But that isn't a real tale," objected Mary.

"Never mind, we like to hear it," said Molly. "What are you doing, Polly?"

"I am building the fire; there must be a whole lot of light stuff to set it going."

"That looks like a good deal," said Molly doubtfully regarding the pile of bark, shaving and light wood that Polly was stowing in the fireplace.

"It will kindle all the quicker," returned Polly in a satisfied voice, touching the kindling with a lighted match. In an instant not only was the light stuff all ablaze, but the flames, leaping out, caught the white apron which Polly had put on, half in sport, when they were getting their supper. It was one of her Aunt Ada's and reached to Polly's ankles, so that she seemed enveloped in flames. She shrieked, but stood still. Quick

as a flash Mary caught up the pitcher of water standing on the table and dashed it over her cousin, then she grabbed her and threw her on the floor, snatching up the rug from the floor before doing so, thus protecting herself, and at the same time providing a means of putting out the fire which she did by rolling Polly in the rug.

Molly was perfectly helpless with fright and all she could do was to wring her hands and cry, "Oh, what shall we do? What shall we do? Oh, Polly, Polly!"

Just as the fire was all crushed out, the door opened and in walked their Uncle Dick. Molly rushed to him. Throwing herself in his arms, she cried: "Oh, Polly is burning up! Save her! Save her!"

"What is all this?" said Dick springing forward.

Mary arose from where she was kneeling over Polly. "I think it is all out now," she said.

Polly unwound herself from her mummy-like case. "Are you badly hurt?" her uncle asked anxiously.

"No," she said with a sobbing breath; "only my legs hurt me."

"How did it all happen?" said her uncle, picking her up and setting her in a chair.

"We were kindling the fire," explained Mary, "and Polly's apron caught."

"And Mary saved her life," sobbed Molly completely unnerved. "She threw water on her, and rolled her in the rug."

"That is what my governess said we should do in such cases," said Mary quietly, though her face was twitching. "I never loved Miss Sharp before," she added with a little laugh.

"You certainly did save Polly's life," said her uncle as he examined Polly's clothing. "Fortunately she has on a woolen frock and has been only slightly scorched about the legs. The fire evidently did not reach her bare flesh. You didn't breathe the flames, did you, Polly, for I see the fire did not go above your waist."

"I am sure I didn't breathe any flames," Polly assured him. "Mary was so quick. She saw at once that I had caught fire and she threw the water over me right away, but oh, Uncle Dick, I may not be burned badly, but it does hurt." And she buried her face on her uncle's shoulder to hide her tears.

"Poor little girl, I know it hurts," he said. "Get some salad oil, Molly, and some baking soda; then see if you can find an old handkerchief or two and some raw cotton. We must try to ease this wounded soldier. How did you children happen to be here alone?"

Mary explained, her uncle listening attentively. "I wish I had known it," he said; "I would not have stayed to supper with the boys. We came in on the Gawthrops' yacht about supper-time and they persuaded me to stay, but somehow I felt that I ought to get home soon after. You children must not be left alone again."

"I'll never try to kindle another fire," said Polly woefully. "Molly said I was putting on too much light stuff and it just leaped out like a tiger to bite me."

Molly had returned with the oil and other things by this time, and soon Polly was made as comfortable as her hurts would allow, but it was some days before she could run about, and if there was anything lacking in her affection for her English cousin before this, now it was that she could not bear her out of sight, for Mary, by her

coolness and capable help, had proved herself a heroine to be loved and admired.

Although this scare was the important topic with the family for some time, the scheme for helping the distressed Dixon family went forward rapidly and the next week when Polly's burns gave her no more uneasiness, the bazaar was held. There was no prettier table the length of the room than that at which Miss Ada presided, assisted by her three little nieces. Their Uncle Dick had cleverly helped them with the decorations as well as with their birch bark boxes in which were planted the little pine trees. These were so much admired that not one was left after the sale, and Mary had to bespeak some to be made for her to carry home. Some little packages of fudge and home-made candies went off rapidly, and of Luella's famous doughnuts not one was left.

It was at the end of the sale when the biggest, finest cake was yet waiting a buyer that Polly had a whispered talk with her Uncle Dick and afterward stood in front of the cake table holding fast to her purse. The cake in all the deli-

ciousness of nut-spotted icing and rich interior, was delivered to her when she paid over the amount asked for it. Taking the treasure in her hands she bore it over to where Mary was helping her aunt count up the money they had taken in. Polly set the cake on the table before Mary. "There," she said, "it is all yours."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mary. "Who said so?"

"I say so. I bought it for you because you said it looked so perfectly delicious."

Mary was quite overcome by Polly's generosity, but she understood the motive, and accepted the cake graciously, promising to divide it with the family. It certainly was a delicious cake, and Polly really enjoyed her share of it, feeling that in this instance she could have her cake and eat it.

"Over a hundred dollars! I can scarcely believe it," said Miss Ada when all the receipts were in. But so it was, and so did little Ellis Dixon have his burdens lifted, for a hundred dollars will go a long way when fish can be had for the catching, and when one has his own potato patch.

CHAPTER X

Arabs

Of all the things which most amused the three little girls and their friend, Grace, they enjoyed dressing up at dusk, and, in their queer costumes, going around from cottage to cottage to call. Uncle Dick was very clever in painting their faces so that they appeared as birds with owl-like eyes and beaks or as cats, rabbits or some other animal. At other times they were Indians in war paint and feathers; again they were Egyptians or Chinese and dressed to suit the character.

"What shall we do this evening?" said Polly one day when the question of the evening's fun was being talked over. "We want to go to Mrs. Phillips's this time because she gives us such good cakes."

"It's pretty far," said Molly doubtfully. "It is almost to the village, and there are some rough boys down that way. I don't mind going to Mrs. Phillips's in the morning, but if we should happen

to get caught there after the sun goes down I shouldn't like it."

"We needn't get caught late," Polly protested, "besides, it is so much more mysterious to go around when it is a little bit duskish. It isn't as if any one of us would be alone; there will be four and nobody around here would do anything to hurt us, anyhow."

"No, I don't suppose any one really would," Molly returned weakly, her objections over-ruled. And therefore when the cottages began to loom darkly against the evening sky, the four little girls sallied forth, draped in white sheets, and made their way over the hilltop to the road beyond. They had usually confined their visits to their acquaintances in the immediate neighborhood, so their aunt did not trouble herself to inquire where they were going that evening, otherwise she might have forbidden the walk they had in mind.

"Don't they look like four dear little Arabs?" said Miss Ada to her brother. "They make a perfect picture as they go over the hill in the evening light. How much they enjoy these little frolics." She turned from watching the white-

sheeted four who soon disappeared down the road.

It was great fun, thought the girls, to call upon their various friends and pretend they were foreigners who did not understand the language of those whom they were visiting; yet they understood enough to accept refreshments offered them, and managed to say, "thank you" and "good-bye."

It was after they had been regaled upon cakes and lemonade at Mrs. Phillips's that the moment came which Molly had been dreading. The shadows had deepened and the stars were trying to come out, while a little light still lingered in the western sky. "We'd better not take the short cut," said Molly. "It is so rough that way, and it is muddy in places; we'll go around by the road." The lights were twinkling out from the fishermen's homes and from the vessels anchored in the cove. There were not many persons on the road, and the four little girls hastened their steps.

Presently a shout, then the bark of a dog arose from behind them, and in another minute they were surrounded by a crowd of jeering boys and

barking dogs. "Yaw! Yaw! Yaw!" shouted the boys. "Sic 'em, Sailor! Sick 'em, Towser!" The dogs nipped at the retreating heels and the boys twitched the flowing robes of the four Arabs.

"Oh, let us alone! Let us alone!" shrieked Molly.

"Who be ye?" cried one of the boys peering into their faces.

"What ye doin' dressed up this here way?" said another. The paint upon their faces so disguised them that they were not recognized by any of the boys, if, indeed, any knew them.

"They ain't none o' our folks," said another boy, trying to jerk off Polly's head covering.

She turned on him fiercely. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," she cried. "How would you like any one to treat your sisters so?"

"How'd you like any one to treat your sisters so?" mimicked the boy in a piping voice. "I ain't got no sister, and if I had she wouldn't be traipsin' 'round the P'int in circus clothes."

Wrenching herself from the boy's grasp, Polly started to run, the other girls following. One boy thrust out his foot tripping Grace who fell

sprawling in the dusty road. Her companions stopped in their flight to come to her rescue. "Oh, you bad, bad boys," cried Molly indignantly. "If I don't tell Cap'n Dave on you."

"We ain't feared o' Cap'n Dave," was the scoffing reply.

The girls picked up the weeping Grace. "Are you hurt?" they whispered.

"I don't know," whimpered Grace. "Oh, how can we get home? I want to go home."

Her weeping caused cessation in hostilities for a moment, but as soon as the four figures started forward they were again surrounded and the teasing recommenced.

But just as the girls were in despair of ever escaping from their tormentors, another boy came up. "What's up?" he asked.

"Oh, nawthin'," replied one of the boys laughing. "We cal'late to keep furriners away from the P'int, and these here ain't dressed like Amur'cans."

"Who are they?" The boy bent over to peer into Molly's face. She gave a joyful cry. "Oh, Ellis, Ellis, save us from them. They won't let us go home."

The newcomer turned. "Say, you fellows," he said. "You'd ought to be ashamed. These here is friends of mine. If any of you fellows touches one of 'em, I'll pitch into him like sin. Don't you know who they are? They're the little gals up to the Reid cottage, that's been so good to us, nursing the baby and gettin' up that fair and all that."

The boys slunk away. "We didn't know it was them," the largest one said. "Why didn't they say so? We thought it was that crowd of sassy youngsters over by Back Landing; they're always so fresh. One of 'em sneaked off with Dan's boat yesterday and we wanted to pay 'em back."

"I'm awful sorry we scared you," said another boy, coming up. "Was you hurt, sissy, when you fell down?"

"Oh, no, not so very much," replied Grace, ceasing her sobbing.

"We'll see you home safe," said one of the boys. "Come on, fellers. Lem, go get a lantern; we're nearest your house."

Lem ran obediently and in a few minutes returned with the big lantern in his hand. He

stalked on ahead, the others trooping after, the dogs at the heels of their masters. All the way they escorted the little girls, Ellis not ceasing to voice his indignation, nor the boys to explain and excuse themselves, and it is needless to say that it was a relief to all concerned when the wandering Arabs were safe within their own dwellings.

In spite of the outcome of their adventure, the girls did not care to repeat it and never again wanted to go beyond the cottages in their own immediate vicinity. Yet, unpleasant as the experience was, it resulted in more than one effort on the part of the gang of boys to make up for their ill behavior. The very next morning after the affair, Polly, who was the first down-stairs, saw a tall boy coming toward the cottage and went out on the porch to meet him.

"You one of the little gals that was down the road last night?" he asked as he came up. "One of them that was dressed up?"

Polly nodded. "Yes, I was there."

"Us boys didn't know you lived here. We wouldn't have hurt a hair of your head if we had knowed who you was." Then he added some-

what shamefacedly, "I fetched ye a salmon. Maybe ye ain't never see a salmon jest out of the water. They're pretty-colored, ain't they?" And he held up to view the glistening pink fish.

"Oh, how beautiful it is. It seems too pretty to catch, doesn't it?" said Polly bending over to examine the fish the boy laid on the grass.

He stared at her, not quite comprehending how any one could think any fish too pretty to be caught. "They're awful good eatin'," he went on to say, "but they don't often come in here."

"How did you happen to get this one?" asked Polly.

"It was in my father's pound this morning, and I begged him for it. Shall I take it into the kitchen for you?" he added hastily.

"Oh, do you mean to give it to us? How very good you are," said Polly appreciatively.

The boy gave a short laugh. "I wasn't very good last night, was I?" he said, and Polly understood that this was a peace offering.

That afternoon two younger lads were seen hanging around the house bearing a mysterious something done up in a newspaper. "What in conscience do them boys want?" said Luella,

looking out of the kitchen window. "It's Billy Laws and Horeb Potter. What are they peekin' around here for I want to know." One of the boys now advanced toward the house, but at the appearance of Miss Ada on the porch, he took to his heels, and lurked in the distance where his companion was uneasily waiting.

Luella went out to Miss Ada. "Them boys has got some errant here," she said, "but they won't come in whilst they see you on the piazza." Miss Ada reëntered the house. The three little girls peeped from the windows, looking out from behind the blinds. In a few minutes the boys came stealthily forth, tiptoed toward the house, halted fearfully, took a few steps back, came on more quickly. He who bore the newspaper package was suddenly pushed violently forward by the other and came on with a trot, bolted into the kitchen, laid the package on the table before Luella and exclaimed hastily: "It's for the little gals!" then he took to his heels, not stopping till he was clear out of sight.

Luella came laughing into the living-room. "Here's another present," she announced. "You open it, Miss Ada."

"What can it be?" exclaimed the children, gathering around their aunt who untied the string of the damp parcel, unwrapped it and disclosed to view a huge lobster, fiery red, and still warm from recent boiling.

"Isn't he a monster?" exclaimed Miss Ada. "I don't believe I ever saw a larger. We'll have him for supper, Luella. I hope you took half the salmon to Mrs. Wharton, for we couldn't eat that and this, too. Children, you will have to invite Grace over to have her share. I suppose some of it is due to her anyhow."

"She ought to have it all," said Polly, "for she was the only one who was hurt."

"I'm afraid she'd suffer more still if she attempted to devour this entire lobster," laughed Miss Ada. "We'd better spare her little tum, Polly, and help her eat this."

It was after such of the lobster as they could eat had been disposed of, and the children with no desire for long wanderings, were safely gathered around the fire, that a tap was heard at the door. Uncle Dick arose to open it and received into his hands a large cold jar, while a small lad piped out: "Jerry sent this to the

little gals. They'll keep." And then the figure vanished into the darkness.

"I don't know who Jerry is, nor what 'this' is," said Uncle Dick, bearing in the glass jar and setting it on the table. "It's for the 'little gals' I was told. Great Cæsar! It's clams, carefully shelled. See here, Ada, we won't have to buy any more provender this season at this rate. When we get short of provisions we can send out our Arabs on the road, for behold the result of their evening's migrations."

Every one laughed at this latest gift, and it was set away for the next day's use. But the end was not yet. On the door sill the next morning was discovered a splint basket. To the handle was tied a scrap of paper on which was awkwardly written: "To the little gals." Molly was the finder of this. "Hurry down all of you!" she called to the others. "There is a present."

"Another one?" said Polly over the baluster. "What is it?"

"I haven't looked," was the reply.

The other children, joined by Miss Ada, came down as soon as possible, their curiosity excited.

Molly lifted the wet seaweed covering the contents of the basket and they saw a pile of shining little mackerel.

"Tinkers!" cried Miss Ada. "What a nice lot of them! Oh, and there are some butter-fish, too. They are all cleaned beautifully, and we must have some for breakfast; it will take only a few minutes to cook them. You children can run over to Grace with her share."

This the little girls were glad to do, but returned with their platter full explaining that a smaller lot had been left at the Whartons'.

But two more conscience offerings were received after this. Four thick braids of sweet grass were found hanging on the door-knob, and, during the day a man delivered a mysterious box slatted across one end. This was found to contain a beautiful kitten of the variety called "Coon." The children were wild over this last gift, the only drawback to their delight being the difficulty of deciding which one should take it home. Their Aunt Ada came to the rescue by telling them not to bother about it till the time came and then to let circumstances settle it. Her own little cat, Cosey, was not inclined

to favor the intruder at first, but in a few days she began to mother it and they soon became good friends.

"Are you glad that the boys scared us that night?" asked Polly one day not long after the "day of gifts" as the children called it.

Molly weighed the subject. "When I think of the dear kitten and the salmon and the tinkers."

"And the lobster."

"Yes, and the sweet grass, then I am, but when I think of how dreadfully frightened we were, I'm not."

"I don't intend to remember the scare," said Polly philosophically.

"Neither do I," added Mary. "I'd be an Arab again for the sake of finding out how really good-hearted those boys are," which showed that Mary had a good heart, too.

CHAPTER XI

The Roseberry Family

THE green grass of June had turned to russet; the bayberry bushes began to look dingy, and the waxy cranberries in the bog were turning to a delicate pink. It had been a dry season and the children could safely traverse the bog from end to end without danger of getting their feet wet. Ellis was their pilot to this fascinating spot, and the day of their introduction to it was one long to be remembered.

It was one morning when Ellis came around to the back door to deliver clams that they first heard of the bog. He added to the weekly order a little bag of pinky-white cranberries. "I thought maybe you'd like 'em," he said. "Miss Alice Harvey says they're much better when they're not quite ripe. Ora tried some and they were fine, but they took a lot of sugar."

"Thank you for remembering us," said Miss Ada as she received the offering. "How much, Ellis?"

"Nawthin'. They're easy to pick and there's plenty of 'em," he made reply.

Miss Ada accepted the gift in the spirit in which it was intended. "I'm sure we shall enjoy them," she declared. "Where is the bog, Ellis? Is it very wet there?"

"'Tain't wet at all this year. This has been such a dry season. It's down back of Cap'n Orrin's barn."

"Oh, is that the place?" Molly was peeping over her aunt's shoulder. "I've always longed to go there but I was afraid it was all sloppy and marshy; some one said it was."

"Would you like me to go there with you?" said Ellis bashfully. "I know where the cranberries grow, and there's lots of other things down there, the kind you city people like to get, weeds, we call 'em."

"Oh, may we go?" Molly appealed to her aunt.

"Why yes, I have no objection. It is perfectly safe if it's not wet. I suppose you may encounter a garter snake or two, but you don't mind them, Molly."

"Wait for us, Ellis," said the little girl speed-

ing away for her cousins with whom she returned in a moment. All three were breathlessly eager to start on the voyage of discovery, for with Ellis as leader, into what regions of the unknown might they not penetrate.

Over the hill they went, leaving Cap'n Orrin's mild-eyed cows gazing after them ruminatively as they crept under the fence which separated the pasture from the wild bottom land at the foot of the hill. On the other side arose the ridge along which were ranged cottages looking both coveward and seaward. A winding path led past runty little apple trees and huge boulders, and finally was lost in the tangle of growth overspreading the marsh.

"It is dry enough now," said Mary exultantly, setting her foot on a tuft of dry grass. "Where are the cranberries, Ellis? I want to see those first."

"You are standing right over some," he said smiling.

Mary looked down, but only a mass of weeds and grass greeted her eyes. "I don't see them," she declared.

Ellis laughed, bent over and parted the grass

to disclose the delicate wreaths of green, and the pretty smooth cranberries, tucked away in the dry grass.

"As if they were afraid of being picked," remarked Mary. "You will not escape me that way." And down on her knees she went in search of the pink fruit.

Molly meanwhile had gone further afield, and was gathering flowers strange to her, and grasses as lovely as the blossoms. Earlier in the season, she had delighted in the rosy plumes of the hardhack, the sweet pinky-white clover, the wild partridge peas, but here were new acquaintances which were not to be found outside the marsh, and upon them she pounced eagerly.

It was Polly, however, who discovered the Roseberry family, for Polly, who had spent her life far from cities, had developed her imagination, and could fashion from unpromising material the most fascinating things. and though she, too, picked her share of cranberries, she also gathered a lot of roseberries which she declared were the biggest she had ever seen. These she bore away in triumph, while Molly carried her bouquet with a satisfied air and Mary was quite

content with having the largest showing of cranberries. So they returned, well pleased, to the cottage.

"We had the splendidest morning," said Molly, setting her flowers in a large vase. "I never knew that bogs could be so perfectly fine. What are you doing, Polly?"

Polly was seated on the floor industriously picking off her roseberries from the twigs. "Wait and you will see," was her answer. "Do get me some pins, Molly, a whole lot. Aunt Ada will give you some."

Molly's curiosity being aroused, she rushed off to her aunt, returning with a paper of pins. She squatted down on the floor by Polly's side. Mary, meanwhile, had gone to the kitchen to superintend Luella's cooking of the cranberries. Polly stuck a pin in one side of the biggest, fattest roseberry, then another in the other side. "This is Mr. Roseberry," she said, "and these are his two arms. Now his head goes on, and then his legs. I use the pins, you see, because you can bend them so as to make the people sit down." She held up the completed mannikin. "Now I must pick out some berries

for Mrs. Roseberry, and then I'll make the children."

"Polly, you are so ridiculous," said Molly in a tone of admiration, "but do you know, they are awfully funny with their little round heads and bodies." Polly worked away industriously till she had completed her entire family. "Now what?" said Molly. "What in the world is that?"

"It is a lamp," returned Polly, deftly fitting a base to her red globe. "Now, if I had some pasteboard I could make some furniture, and we'd play with the Roseberry family this afternoon."

"Dinner is nearly ready now," said Molly, "but it will be fun to play with them this afternoon. We could have two or three families. What can I name mine?" She watched Polly interestedly as she put the last touch to a vase in which she stuck a bit of green.

"You might call them Pod," said Polly. "These are really the seed pods of the wild roses, you know. They are like little apples, aren't they?"

"Oh, I'll call them Appleby," said Molly.

"We know some people named that. Save that tiny one for the baby, Polly."

"The cranberries are perfectly delicious," said Mary, coming in from the kitchen, "but they have to cool before we can eat them. Luella says they take so much sugar that they will keep perfectly for me to take some home. Oh, what curious little figures."

"This is the Roseberry family," Polly told her, indicating the dolls on the right, "and these," she pointed to those on her left, "these are the Applebys."

"You must have some, too, Mary," said Molly. "What shall you call yours?"

Mary had picked up one of the little figures. "Why, they are made of hips, aren't they?"

"What are hips?" asked Molly.

"That is what we call the berries of the briar-rose, and in England the hawthorn berries are haws."

"Hips and haws," sang Molly. "Don't they go nicely together? Shall you call your people Mr. and Mrs. Hips?"

"Why, yes, I can. I think that would be a very good name. Are we going to play with them?"

"After dinner we are, if Polly can find anything to make furniture of."

Polly's ingenuity did not fail her here, for, by the use of some match ends, birch bark and a needle and thread she contrived all sorts of things and then each girl hunted up a box for a house, so that these new playthings proved to be very fascinating.

But at last the every-day commonplaces grew too dull for Polly, and she suddenly exclaimed: "I'm tired of just visiting and talking about measles and nurses and mustard plasters! I'm going to take the Roseberry family down to the shore. They're going to have an adventure."

"Oh, Polly, what? Can ours go, too?" cried Molly. "I would like to have the Applebys meet an adventure, too."

"And I'd like Mr. and Mrs. Hips to have one," echoed Mary.

"Are they very wicked, black-hearted people?" asked Polly, darkly.

"Why—why ——" Mary hesitated and looked to Molly for her cue.

"Do they have to be wicked to have an adventure?" asked Molly.

"If they join the Roseberries, they'll have to be, for the Roseberries are wreckers and smugglers." Polly spoke impressively, and at this flight of fancy Molly and Mary gazed at her admiringly. Yet they were not quite willing that their families should give up their morals to too great an extent.

"What do they have to do?" asked Mary, determined to find out the worst.

"Mine have a cave," said Polly, mysteriously. "It is on an island—I know what island I am going to have—and there they hide their treasures. They are counterfeiters, too," she added to their list of crimes, "and they have chests of counterfeit money—sand dollars."

Molly laughed and Polly looked at her reproachfully. "It is as good as any other counterfeit money," she remarked.

"Never mind the money. Go on, Polly." Molly was enjoying her cousin's inventions.

"Well, they go out in a boat on stormy nights and when a vessel is in distress, instead of helping, they don't do anything but just wait till the vessel is wrecked and then they help themselves to what they can get. They have, oh, such a

store of diamonds and rubies and precious stones in their cave, and they have their own vessel that flies a black flag."

"Then they're pirates," said Mary recoiling. "I don't want the Hips to be pirates."

"They don't have to be," Polly calmly assured her. "They can be as good as they want to, and can be on one of the vessels that gets wrecked."

"Then they'll all get drowned."

"No, they needn't; they can cling to a raft and go ashore on some desert island."

Having saved the lives as well as the reputations of the Hips family, although they would probably lose everything else, Mary was satisfied, but Molly was ready to compromise. A little spice of wickedness seemed necessary to make her Applebys interesting. "My family can be smugglers," she announced, "but I don't want them to be pirates and I don't want them wrecked either. Smugglers aren't so wicked as pirates; they only bring in things that you ought to pay duty on, Uncle Dick told me, and Mary's father told her that in England almost everything comes in free, and that the United States is as mean as can be about making people pay for what is brought

into the country. A lady, Molly saw on the steamer when they came over, had an awful time about a shabby old sealskin coat she'd had for years, and just because she wore it ashore from the steamer, they made an awful fuss about it."

"Well, I don't understand about it, but if the United States said it was wrong, of course it must have been; they are always right," said Polly loyally. "I don't exactly know about smuggling," she confessed, "however, the Roseberries are going to be smugglers."

"Uncle Dick was telling us about smugglers the other night."

"Yes, I know, that is what made me think of it. He showed me the island where there used to be a smuggler's cave."

"I remember it; we saw it when we were out sailing one day."

"We must build a birch bark ship for the Hips family," said Polly, changing the subject. "Your Applebys can live on my island and if they don't want to associate with the Roseberries they can have a cave to themselves."

"Roseberry is such a nice pleasant name for

wicked people," remarked Mary. "Why don't you call them something else?"

"Nobody ever does call them that," returned Polly readily. "The father is the leader of the gang, and he is Bold Ben. His three sons are One-eyed Peter, Crooked Tom, and Sly Sam. They call his wife Old Mag, and then there are two cousins, twins; they are Smiling Steve and Grinning Jim."

"Oh, Polly, how do you think of such names?" said Molly delightedly. "What does Old Mag do?"

"She pulls in things from the wreck and she cooks the meals. Then, when the men are all away smuggling, she sits in the cave and spends her time looking at the jewels and letting them drip through her fingers."

"Jewels can't drip," observed Mary in a matter-of-fact way.

"Well, they look as if they could," returned Polly. "The diamonds are like drops of water, the pearls like milk and the rubies like blood."

"I know where you found that," said Molly; "in the fairy tale we were reading the other day."

Polly admitted the fact and the ship being no ready to launch, they proceeded to the shor where Polly pointed out the island. This was large rock, nearly covered at high tide, but no showing quite a surface above the water. I rugged sides held caves quite large enough fo persons of such size as the Roseberry family, an they were presently hidden behind their barnacle barriers. In a little pool the Hips family wer set afloat while the Applebys contented them selves with gathering stores of supposed precious stones from the little beach.

The Hips family had hardly set sail before Polly invoked a storm and stirred to monste waves the waters in their pool, so they were in great danger. "Oh, dear, the youngest Hips is floating away and I can't save him," cried Mary

"Never mind, let him go; there are plenty more of them," returned Polly heartlessly bang ing her stick up and down in the water so the ship would rock more violently. "They've got to be wrecked, you know," she added. "I'll drive them on that rock, then you can grab them before they sink and get them on the raft."

Mary managed to rescue all but one more of

the family, and these were set adrift on a piece of birch bark to which Polly tied a string that they might not go beyond return. She also allowed the storm to cease, but this was because the gang of wreckers had to haul up the ship and gather in their plunder. She kept up so lively an account of their doings that Molly left the Applebys to their own devices and Mary drew the Hipses to shore that she might listen to Polly's blood-curdling account of Bold Ben and the rest. Polly did not have to draw altogether from her imagination, for her brothers had been too often her playmates for her not to be ready with tales of plunder and adventure.

Time passed very quickly and the children became so absorbed in the manœuvres of the gang that they did not notice the stealthy rise of the tide till Mary exclaimed, "Oh, the Hipses have floated off and they were quite high on the beach!"

Polly looked around her. "No wonder," she said; "the tide is rising. We'd better start back." Leaving Bold Ben and his comrades to their fate, she ran to the further side of the rock, but here she hesitated. The sea was steadily

making in, sending little cascades over the weed-covered ledges each time it retreated.

"Can't you get across?" asked Molly, as she came up with her Applebys, and saw Polly standing still.

"I'm almost afraid to jump," said Polly, "for if a big wave should come in suddenly it might wash in over my feet and the sea-weed is so slippery I'm afraid to trust to it, where it is shallower."

Molly looked up at the rocky shelf jutting out above her. "If we could only get up there," she said.

"But we can't; it is too far to climb to that first jutty-out place, and we can't crawl under and then up, like flies."

Mary bearing the sole survivor of the unfortunate Hips family now came up. "I had to let the rest go," she said. "They were beyond reach. I fished this one out of the water just in time. What is the matter? Why don't you go on, Polly?"

For answer Polly pointed silently to the creeping waves at her feet.

"What are we going to do?" asked Mary in alarm.

"Stay here till the tide goes down, I suppose. This rock is never covered," said Molly.

"But we may get dreadfully splashed," returned Mary.

"I hadn't thought of that," said Polly dubiously. She looked at the rock above her, and then at her two cousins. "Which of you two could stand on my shoulders and get hold of that rock so as to draw herself up and go for help?"

"Oh, I never could do it in the world," said Mary, shrinking back.

Polly turned to Molly. "Could you?"

"I'm afraid I couldn't pull myself up so far, but I could stand and let you get on my shoulders, if you could do the pulling up part."

"I could do that easily enough," Polly told her. "I've often practiced it with the boys, and we have swung ourselves up the rocks in the mountains out home. Are you sure you can bear my weight, Molly?"

"I can try."

"We'll both do it," Mary offered. "You can put one foot on my shoulder and one on Molly's, then you won't be so heavy for either one."

"All right. Steady yourselves. Here goes."

And in a moment Polly had clambered to the supporting shoulders, had caught hold of the jutting rock and had drawn herself up. As she gained her feet and sped away crying: "I'll be right back," Molly breathed a sigh of relief. "I was so afraid a piece of the rock would split off and she'd fall," she confessed to Mary.

It took but a little time to bring Uncle Dick and one of his friends who swung themselves down easily and set the two stranded children upon a safe spot, none too soon, for a big wave almost immediately sent a shower of salt spray over the rock where they had been standing.

"You would have been drenched to the skin," said Uncle Dick as he led the way to the house, while, left to their fate, the wicked Roseberries perished miserably.

CHAPTER XII

East and West

By the middle of September the cottages on the Point were nearly all deserted, though the Reids lingered on, to the children's satisfaction.

"Oh, dear, I don't want to go back to school, so horrid old examples and things, although I do want to see my dear Miss Isabel," said Molly, one morning just before the close of their stay.

"I don't want to see Miss Sharp, I can tell you that, but I do want to see mother and Reggie and Gwen," said Mary.

"I hate to leave you all," Polly put in, 'though I shall be glad to see mamma and papa and the boys. I'll like to see the ponies too, and the mountains and everything, but I do wish you girls were going with me." She really had fewer regrets than her cousins for Polly loved the freedom of the west, and the miles between seemed very long to the little girl who had seen neither

father, mother nor brothers for three months. To Mary the delights of unlimited supplies of sweet potatoes and corn, bountiful plates of ice-cream, freedom from the vigilance of a strict governess, and the range of fields and woods, where one need not fear of trespassing, and which were not enclosed by high walls, all these compensated much for her separation from her family.

The time for her leave-taking of America was drawing near, however, for her father wrote that they would probably sail about the first of October, and Uncle Dick would take Polly home about the same time. Aunt Ada, too, had promised to go to Colorado for a visit so Polly felt that she had anticipations the others did not have.

"I wish we could all go to Polly's; that's what I wish," declared Molly. "I wish my father and mother and Mary and Miss Ainslee were all going."

"I speak for Miss Ainslee to sit with me," said Uncle Dick coming up with an open letter in his hand. He handed a second letter to Molly. "Can you read it?" he asked.

"Of course I can," returned Molly indignantly. Then she added, "Mamma always writes to me on papa's typewriter."

Her uncle laughed, though Molly could not see why.

"You'd better read every word in it," he remarked, "for there is big news there for a young woman of your size."

Molly hastily tore open the envelope and began to read. She had not finished the page, however, before she cried out: "News! News! I should think it was news. What do you think, Mary? What do you think, Polly?"

"Can't imagine," said Polly. Then as a second thought occurred to her, "Oh, is your mother going to let you go home with me? I know my mother has asked to have you, for I wrote to her to beg that you could come."

Molly shook her head. "No, it's east instead of west, Polly. Mother and I are going to England with Mary and Uncle Arthur."

"Oh!" Mary jumped to her feet and clasped her hand ecstatically. "Oh, Molly, I am so glad. Aren't you?"

"Yes, I am except for one thing; I know I

shall be scared to death of Miss Sharp. Is she really so very, very strict?"

"My word! but you'd think so. Fancy never being allowed to run, nor to climb nor to do anything one really likes to do, and, oh, Molly, I wonder will you eat your meals in the nursery with us children. There's nasty rice pudding twice a week, you know, and there are never hot rolls nor biscuits for breakfast as you have here, then we do have horribly cold houses in winter."

"Oh!" Molly looked quite disturbed by this report. But presently her face again broke into smiles. "But then, to see England and to be with you, Mary. We shall go up to London in the spring and we shall spend the winter in Cornwall or Devon, where it is not so very cold, mother says."

"Oh, we are to be in the country, then," said Mary. "I'm glad of that. Papa thought we should take our country home again this winter; we were not there last year."

"It's so funny to go to the country for winter and the city for summer," remarked Polly. "We do just the opposite."

"Oh, but we like the country in winter," Mary

explained. "It's jolly good sport to be there then. We have a proper little pony of our own, you know, and we really have quite good times."

Polly laughed. "It is so funny to hear Mary say a 'proper' pony. We would say a real pony, wouldn't we?"

"I shall be corrected a great many times for the American things I have learned to say," said Mary. "I've no doubt but that Miss Sharp will be continually coming down on me for saying them. She is a sharp one, true enough. I'll have to watch myself."

"She needn't try to correct me," Molly put in.

"Oh, but you are an American," Mary hastened to reassure her, "and you'll do just as your mother bids you, of course."

This relieved the situation for Molly. The prospect of frequent drives behind the "proper little pony," and the pleasure of a real English Christmas, which Mary had described in glowing colors, cheered her up, and she stated that she thought she could stand Miss Sharp as long as her own mother would always be on hand to refer to.

As the three were talking it all over, Uncle

Dick appeared at the door. "Well, Mollykins," he said, "how do you like your news?"

"Oh, do you know it, too?" she said, running up to him. "I like it very much, but I wish you and Aunt Ada and Polly were going, too."

"That would be too many at once," he returned. "Go in and see your Aunt Ada; she has something to tell you."

"Who is it about?" asked Molly.

Uncle Dick walked down the porch steps. "It concerns me very much," he said over his shoulder.

"Concerns him? Do you suppose he is going to England, too?" said Mary.

"Let's go and find out," returned Molly. And the three ran indoors to where Miss Ada sat.

"Well, kitties," she said as they came in, "there is a lot of news to-day, isn't there?"

"Yes, isn't it fine that mother and I are going to England? That is what you meant, isn't it?"

"Not all."

"Uncle Dick said you had something to tell us," said Polly.

"So I have. It concerns Polly more than any

of you, though it might concern Molly if she were not going abroad."

"That sounds like a puzzle," laughed Polly. "But Uncle Dick said it concerned him."

"The silly boy!" Miss Ada drew down the corners of her mouth. "No doubt he'll make it his concern. Why Polly, it is this: Mr. Perkins, your tutor, has had a good offer in Denver and as he is so well and strong now he thinks he must accept it, and as Walter is old enough to go away to school, your father and mother thought a man was not needed to teach you and the others, so you are to have a new teacher. Guess who it is to be?"

"Oh, I can't. Tell me." Polly was all eagerness.

"Miss Ainslee."

"Not my Miss Ainslee?" cried Molly in surprise.

"Your Miss Ainslee."

"Oh, I'm jealous," said Molly. "Oh, Polly, to think you will have her all to yourself. Oh, dear!"

"But you will not be here, honey," said her aunt, "and besides it is better for Miss Ainslee

that she should go, for the doctor thinks she cannot get along in the east, and that she must either stop teaching or go to another climate. She isn't ill exactly, but it is better that she should not wait till she is. So you see——"

"Oh, I see, but I am sorry all the same," said Molly dolefully.

"And I am tremendously glad," said Polly. "I liked Mr. Perkins very well, but Miss Ainslee is such an improvement on him. Is she to go out with us, Aunt Ada?"

"Yes."

"Then that is what Uncle Dick meant when he said it concerned him. He was thinking how nice it would be to travel all that way with her."

"He's looking further than that," remarked Miss Ada with a smile. "If things keep on this way I don't believe she will ever come east again to live, Polly."

"She won't if I can help it," said Uncle Dick from the doorway. "What do you think of our scheme, Pollywog?" he asked as he caught Polly and tousled her.

"I think it is grandiferous," replied Polly,

squirming out of his grasp. "But you'd better behave yourself, Mr. Dicky-Pig, or I'll tell on you."

"Just see how she gets me in her power," said Uncle Dick to his sister. "I'll not be safe a moment from that wicked child's malicious tales."

"Don't you call me a wicked child," said Polly darting at him. "Now for your nose."

"Spare me! Spare me!" cried her uncle, putting up both hands. "I'll be good, Polly; I will indeed, but if you spoil my features, how can you expect Miss Ainslee ever to like me? If you'll promise to be good and say nice things about your dear uncle, I'll let you be bridesmaid."

"Oh, Dick, you silly boy!" expostulated his sister. "Don't fill the child's head with such notions. He hardly knows Miss Ainslee, Polly, and it will make her so uncomfortable that she will leave, in a month, if your Uncle Dick keeps up this sort of nonsense."

This hushed up Master Dick and he began to ask Polly such silly questions as: "What is the result of half a dozen ears of corn and a pint of Lima beans?"

"You can't add ears and pints," protested Polly stoutly.

"Oh, yes, you can," returned her uncle jauntily. "Luella does it often and the result is succotash."

Polly made a contemptuous mouth at him.

He laughed and went on. "Here's another. "When apples are ten cents a quart how much are blueberries?"

"Why, why—they're just the same. Aren't they?" Polly appealed to her Aunt Ada.

"The blueberries are less; they're always less; they're smaller, you see," her uncle answered.

"That's no answer at all," said Polly in a disgusted tone. "I won't play," and she stalked off to join her cousins.

Yet, as the poet Burns says: "The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley," and, after all, things did not turn out exactly as was at first expected, for when the children had made their rounds to say good bye to Ellis and Myrtle, Leona, Ora and the rest, and when they were actually on the boat with Cooney safe in a big basket, Uncle Dick pulled some letters out of his

pocket and began to look them over. "I found these in our box this morning when I went into the post-office," he said. "There's one for you, Ada, and here's one for me from Arthur." He glanced down the page. "Well, well, well," he exclaimed, "this settles your hash, Miss Molly."

"What do you mean?" asked Molly, leaving her seat and coming over to him.

"Why, listen. This is from Mary's father. 'A turn in the business which brought me over, compels me to remain at least three months longer, so I am accepting John Perrine's kind offer to keep my little girl till I am ready to go back home. I am sure the dry climate of Colorado will complete the good work of the summer and that I shall be able to take Mary home with her health entirely established.'"

Polly rushed tumultuously at Mary and gave her a hearty squeeze. "I'm going to have you! I'm going to have you!" she cried. "Won't we have good times?"

Molly sat with a very grave face looking on. Her uncle smiled down at her. "Looks as if you were out of it, doesn't it, Mollykins?" he said.

Molly turned a mournful countenance upon him and gave a long sigh. "I s'pose mother and I will not be going to England at all," she said.

"I 's'pose' not," said her aunt. "In fact I am quite sure of it. She put down the letter which she was reading. "There is a change of plans all around, Molly dear, and you're not left out, as you will see. You know, my dearie, that your mother was taking the opportunity of visiting England because your father expected to make a business trip which would keep him away from home all winter, and your parents had concluded to rent their house to some friends. Now that the house is actually rented and you are not going to England your mother will go with your father, and you, Molly, my kitten, will go to Colorado that you may still have your lessons, and be in good hands. Your father and mother will stop for you on their way home. As for me ——"

Molly did not wait for the last words, but rushed over to where Mary and Polly with heads together were excitedly talking over the plans for the coming winter. Molly precipitated her-

self upon them in a tumult of excitement. "I'm going, too! I'm going, too!" she cried.

"Where? Where?" exclaimed Polly.

"To Colorado! to Colorado, with you and Mary!" chanted Molly.

A squeal of delight from Polly was followed by one scarcely less joyful from Mary, and then the three took hold of hands and danced around the steamboat cabin till they dropped in a heap at the feet of their aunt and uncle.

"Just think," said Molly when she had recovered her breath. "We'll all be together just as we were this summer, you, Polly, and Mary and Uncle Dick and Aunt Ada."

"You must count me out, Molly," said her Aunt Ada. "I shall do no more than see you all safely at the ranche, and then I am going to spend the winter further south with my dear friend Janey Moffatt who has been married a whole year and whom I have never yet visited. I have just had this letter setting the time for me to come. I think Miss Ainslee and your Aunt Jennie can keep you three in order."

"If not, there am I," put in Uncle Dick scowling savagely.

"As if you ——" began Polly. But he made a dive at her and she disappeared behind a pillar of the cabin.

"Now," said Miss Ada, "it is just as I said: there will be no difficulty in deciding where Cooney is to go, and to tell you the truth, my dears, I think he will thrive better in a cool climate than anywhere else, for with their fluffy coats, these little coon cats are liable to fall ill and die where it is too warm for them. The ranche will be just the place for him." So Cooney's future was assured and in time he reached his new home safely, none the worse for the long journey, during which he was tenderly cared for. Luella had gladly taken charge of Cosey, promising to return to Miss Ada the next summer and to bring the little cat with her.

"Even if I'm married," she said, "Granville says I may live with you summers, Miss Ada, whilst he's off fishing."

When Molly had spent two weeks with her parents and Mary had seen her father, the three little girls were ready to set out upon their longer journey, though it must be confessed that at the last Molly found it hard to say good-bye,

and Mary looked rather grave. Polly, however, reminded Mary that there would be no Miss Sharp at the ranche, and Uncle Dick whispered to Molly that he didn't see how any one could be other than happy at the prospect of spending part of each day in Miss Ainslee's company, and from that began to make such delightful plans that in a short time they were happy in thinking of the good times ahead of them. Uncle Dick promised to provide each with a safe little broncho to ride. Aunt Ada told them that their Aunt Jennie had put three small beds in her biggest room, so that the little girls could room together. Miss Ainslee told Molly confidentially that it made all the difference in the world to her that she was to have one of her own little pupils with her, and Polly, who really loved Cooney more than either of the others, was so delighted at not having to give him up that she was ready to share him generously with her cousins, and always lifted him over into Mary's or Molly's lap whenever one of them said: "Now, Polly, you have had him long enough."

Altogether the long journey was not unpleasant, and when the travelers at last arrived,

though they were weary, they were very happy, and that night cuddled down in their little white beds while around their dwelling place towered up the great mountains, steadfast as the friendship which was born that summer in the hearts of the three little cousins and which lasted their lifetime.